1992

Modernity and War in the Poetry of T. S. Eliot.

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The Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical Col., 1992

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MODERNITY AND WAR IN THE POETRY OF T. S. ELIOT

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in
The Department of English

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December 1992

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ABSTRACT

Although most readers of T. S. Eliot have agreed that the European experience of world war and the resultant political and cultural dislocations provided an important context and source of imagery for much of his work, what has not been recognized is Eliot's use of figures of war to represent the intimate yet antagonistic relations between the poet's writing of modernity and the text that is history. Beginning with a tropological analysis of Eliot's "A Note on War Poetry," relative to both the genre of war poetry and aesthetic modernity, this study examines the figural interpenetration of war and literary construction in Eliot's two "post-war" poems "Gerontion" and The Waste Land. In these poems, figures of war express the impulse to displace through formalist strategies of appropriation the real and threatening proximity of war to art, but, paradoxically, this very translation of the vocabulary of war into the terms of art exposes the inescapable correlation between the aesthetic and the historical, a correlation increasingly problematic in a time when all cultural forms seemed suddenly deprived of

their innocence. The study concludes with a close analysis of the figuration of war in Eliot's wartime poetry, the Four Quartets. To write poetry in a time of war, for T. S. Eliot, was to confront the accusations of history's "horrific capability," accusations of poetry's complicity, of its irrelevance, of its inadequacy. To figure such a threat into the poetry meant not to cancel or to evade history's accusatory colloquy but, by giving it form, to articulate the necessary implication of all writing in the conditions of history.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

"A NOTE ON WAR POETRY"

Hugh Kenner has recently observed that T.S. Eliot has suffered the peculiar fate of never being credited for noticing anything: "We never ask what it's routine to ask about Wordsworth or even Keats: what Thomas Eliot may have observed when he opened his eyes, and what he made of it" (Muse 19). The critical charge of myopia seems unwarranted given that Eliot's reputation, however tarnished in recent years, still rests upon the accuracy of The Wasteland's diagnosis of the post-war milieu, a poem written by a poet many have thought of as the great diagnostician of twentieth-century life. And yet Kenner's point is true. We do not observe Eliot observing, bringing news of material specificities, in the way that Joyce or Pound did. Indeed, it is Kenner himself who in his major work on Eliot, The Invisible Poet, stressed the Eliotic vagueness, a symbolist strain that, coupled with a naturally ironic temper,

produced a poetry of such vagueness that Kenner called his style "the most generalizing style in English literature" (Muse 42). But now Kenner presents an alert, attentive onlooker bringing news of the mechanical novelties of the twentieth century and grasping their effects on the rhythms of consciousness. For example, the passage from the "Preludes" that we have all routinely generalized as exemplifying the alienation of the modern urbanite--

> With the other masquerades
> that time resumes,
> One thinks of all the hands
> That are raising dingy shades
> In a thousand furnished rooms.

Kenner himself observes that Eliot "was bringing news" of one of the century's new novelties, the mass-produced cheap alarm clock, which created the new world of the commuter and which explains why at one moment one could count on a thousand hands pulling up dingy shades--(i.e., the pull-down blind with spring-loaded rollers, which was also one of the novelties that allowed one to gauge life's rhythms to mechanical time rather than to the natural time of day and night.) Or the hour when one left work,

> when the eyes and back
> Turn upward from the desk, when the human engine waits
> Like a taxi throbbing waiting.

Kenner adds :

> And leaving the office one could choose the elevator or the stairs:
>
> > This is the one way, and the other
> > Is the same . . .
>
> The 'other' way was 'the same' in two respects: it took you down, and it numbed your sensibility. It was the electric lift, in which you and your fellow commuters did not move, but the box you were standing in did the moving; a descent
> . . . not in movement
> But abstention from movement; while the world moves (Muse 24-25).

But, if we do not observe Eliot observing, it is because Eliot's observations are not, as Kenner finally admits, recognizable once embedded in the poem. Just as facts for Eliot, in his thesis on Bradley, are not "merely found . . . and laid together like bricks," but are prepared for by interpretive systems, so the observed facts are assimilated and transformed by formalist strategies in such a way that the phenomenon of observation is so overwhelmed by the foregrounding of rhetoricity that any recognition of observed fact is subdued.

The methods are by now quite familiar. There are the radical juxtapositions which remove conventional contexts and replace them with intertextual ones that emphasize not the word as object but rather the word as word--a

decontexualization that, undermining reference, seeks to reanimate and intensify the tropological play of words. There is also the method only used as successfully by Rilke, which Paul De Man describes as a reversal of figural relations: "the inwardness that should belong to the subject is located instead within things" (Allegories 36). Here, objects hold a dark, palpable subjectivity of their own, not of the self that considers them, and yet, upon approach, disappear into echo chambers of figural resources. Hugo Friedrich, referring to Sartre's definition for this method as "a lyrical phenomenology," writes that it "does not so much deform things as make them so inert, or impart so strange a vitality to things inert by nature that a spooky unreality is created" (qtd. in Hamburger 29).

Eliot exploits this chiasmus of word and thing, of feeling and sense, to confuse and to critique the nature of boundaries, of those lines defining the accepted verities of subject and object, those internal and external divisions, which conventionally schematize experience. Like many other writers and thinkers, Eliot was responding to the new sense that reality no longer resided in an objective universal order accessible through conceptual categories, but was present in the irrational and unconscious flux of experience. Constructs of mind,

whether linguistic, religious, or scientific, are all instrumental and provisional so that there is a gap between them and an ineffable reality, a gap that leads to the awareness that existence is determined by self-generated and provisional constructs. Eliot's blurring of outlines is a method both destructive and generative--destructive in the critique of reciprocity; generative in its attempt to grasp an elusive reality by means of words, to ally the universe of language with a unity of experience, to step out of that which already has been written for us into a new reality of words. According to Eliot, "art has to create a new world and a new world must have a new structure" ("London Letter" [Aug.] 216).

Although very different in many respects, modernists shared a faith in the indestructibility of the tie between the word and its object, a logocentric view that offered the possibilities of restructuring and transforming reality through language. The power of language was, as Shari Benstock states, "a transformative one, one that could remake the perception of the world and against which the world--despite its wars and crises of belief, despite radical changes in cultural norms, and redefinitions of physical and psychic occurrences--would remain stable" (15). Frederic Jameson has described this modernist assumption as a "conviction that sense perception can

ultimately be fully rendered in a sentence structure, that a 'parole pleine' is possible, that the world really does exist to end up in a Book, which will replace it and in which the glint of sunlight on a pond, the stir of wind upon the earth's surfaces, will thus forever gleam and mildly tremble in the eternal immobility of the printed sentence" (25-26).

Luxuriously put. But invoking as it does Mallarme's ancestral blood, Jameson's phrasing--which makes use of a natural imagery suitable to any discussion of Eliot's poetry, permeated as it is with images of light, sea and vegetation--underscores the modernist's utopian desire to return to a pristine state preceding the self's entry into history, what Paul De Man describes as the impulse of modernity, the desire to wipe out all anteriority, everything that came earlier, rejecting temporality to reach a point of true origin existent in a singular, non-historical present. However, since "modernity" cannot exist without the negation of history, each pole necessary to the other's power, the impulse of modernity is inextricable from the realization of the ineluctably historical nature of existence--historical, as De Man says, "in the deepest sense of the term in that it implies the necessary experience of any present as a passing experience that makes the past irrevocable and unforgettable, because

it is inseparable from any present or future" (Blindness 148-49). The privileging of the transformative power of the word does not then occur without the paradoxical desire to move beyond words through words, to move through words too saturated with previous articulations, accents, diversities of intent, through bearers of historical determinants, to some neutral Word unmediated by its existence in history. Or, as Eliot puts it, "to write poetry which should be essentially poetry, with nothing poetic about it, poetry standing naked in its bare bones, or poetry so transparent that we should not see the poetry, but that which we are meant to see through the poetry, poetry so transparent that in reading it we are intent on what the poem points at, and not on the poetry . . . To get beyond poetry, as Beethoven, in his later works, strove to get beyond music."[1]

Meanwhile, below the moon, to return to Eliot's observations, the cultural artifacts of the furnished flat, the massive crowds of commuters, the underground and the telephone (which Kenner guesses to be the influence behind the disembodied voices of The Wasteland) testify to the effects of what some historians have called a Second Industrial Revolution, one that changed modern modes of

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[1]From an unpublished 1933 lecture quoted in Matthiessen 96.

living. Consequently, they act as historical specificities carrying the force of history defined in the modern sense by Theodor Adorno as "Die Macht der Vergesellschaftung," those forces "organizing, rationalizing, 'socializing' the structure of society" (56). The very presence of such historically determined figures identifies the formalist strategies of appropriation as arising from an inescapable tension between the aesthetic and historical determinations of words and the determinations of culture, a tension which throws what seems to be at first hand merely an aesthetic or epistemological issue of reference and fact into a conflict between the synchronic act of the poem and the diachronic movement of history, a conflict that Eliot thematizes through the figuration of historically determined objects: the trams, the tube, the face-down crowds of commuters flowing over London Bridge.

But what of another of the century's historically determined "objects" whose broad scope and influence was made possible by the application of new technologies, namely the experience of world war? That Eliot took notice is most certain; one could hardly not. Along with the American Civil War, the first two world wars introduced a new kind of war. For much of modern Western history, the inhumane character of war was restrained by its institutionalization. War, a necessary evil, was an

institution, but one that did not interfere unduly with other functions of society. Restrained by what Freud called the myth of the "fellowship in civilization," war was conducted in such a way as to preserve the mold of civilization, which included the antagonistic parties (274). The distinction between combatant and noncombatant, between those who are fit to fight and those who are not, was maintained in the effort to preserve the humane features of warfare and to confine violence through formal structures of decorum and class structure--witness the astonishing formalism of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century warfare with its correlation of power and aesthetics at the expense of efficiency. During the American Revolution, Americans continued to go abroad to study medicine in Edinburgh or painting under Benjamin West in London. During the Napoleonic Wars, paths for traveling armies were prescribed to allow for the freedom of civilian life. During the Crimean War, Russia paid its debt to its enemy Britain.

That World War I, as Henry James said, was a "plunge of civilization into this abyss of blood and darkness" (384) was not so much because of the massive logistics involved or the extensive geographical area of hostilities, the putrid conditions of the trenches, and the massive number of casualties, but because of the changed character

of war and the changed perception of the enemy.[2] It was total war, the endeavor to make the operations of war as complete and all-encompassing as energy and technology are able, to the point where all life becomes ancillary to the logistical and tactical expression of the war machine. The destruction of armed resistance means not a contest between two professional armies but a complete punitive operation in which the entire living might of the enemy must be totally and indiscriminately destroyed. Bronislaw Malinowski, writing during the second World War, describes it thus:

> Modern war makes it impossible to distinguish between the military personnel of an army and the civilians; between military objectives and the cultural portion of national wealth; and the means of production, the monuments, the churches and the laboratories. Lines of communication; seats of government; centers of industry; and even centers of administrative, legal, and scientific activity are rapidly becoming targets for destruction, as much as garrisons, fortified lines, and airdromes. . . War has to transform every single cultural activity within a belligerent nation. The family and the school, the factory and the courts of law, are affected so profoundly that their work--the exercise of culture through autonomous self-contained institutions--is temporarily paralyzed or distorted. At present, it has become possible to transform some hundred million human beings into one enormous war machine. (264)

In total war, the human being is increasingly reduced to function, the individual submerged into a technological

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[2] For a discussion of the revolutionary quality of total warfare, see Weaver 92-112.

sublimity, his aggression and passion abstracted into the slogans of the state. In short, people become material, automatons of war.

Given that war, especially modern total war, is, to quote Wallace Stevens, the most "extreme pressure of the contemporaneous," how much more will its presence be felt in Eliot's poems? Most readers of Eliot have agreed that the European experience of world war and the resultant political and cultural dislocations provided an important context and source of imagery for much of his work--in "Gerontion," the burden of a decayed Europe's heroic past; in The Waste Land, a vortex of invading hordes, exploding cities, broken columns, and ruined towers; in Eliot's translation of Saint-John de Perse's Anabasis, the migratory conquests of Europe's pre-history; in "Coriolan," the ironic triumph of "post-peace" politics; and in the Four Quartets, the "constellated wars" of bombers and blackouts, Krishna's battle yoga, civil war and civic duty, antique drums and dead patrols.

But if this context of war in much of Eliot's poetry (the above images being by no means exhaustive) is plain, the radical implications of the representation of war for the formalist project have been obscured by a text-centered critical tradition that, duplicating the modernist imperative to displace history through the patterning of

rhetoric, takes as axiomatic the formalist assumption of an impermeable boundary between the historical matrix of experience and the poetic text, without recognizing the self-critique in the very method itself.

Canonical readings of Eliot's poetry, dominated by the text-centered tradition of New Criticism, insist that there exists only an accidental or minimal relation between context and text, for the text is perceived to be an autonomous verbal construct that does not so much reflect extra-verbal constructs as displace or transmute them. Those holding such a view, therefore, most often relegate references to war in the poetry to, as Stephen Greenblatt says, the "well-lighted pigeonhole" of historical background (103). This is not to say that such commentators have not been concerned with historical themes. Indeed, for the first forty years of Eliot criticism, critics emphasized historical, public themes and read the poetry as a topographical map of the age's spiritual anxieties, for the New Critic sees history not as a Heraclitian flux of sociopolitical and economic ripples, but as a river of revealed significance that always tells the same story--hence the New Critical leitmotifs of the fall from organic community, the loss of transcendent order, the secularization, thus alienation of man from communal values, the fragmentation of the modern world, and

the quest for transcendent order. In short, the view is mythic, and as myth orders the chaos of discrete details into a formal unity, so does art. The act of synthesis, the complexity of connotations held in the equipoise of irony all harmonize the incongruities and complexity of experience into a unified whole that restores and thus reminds of a lost ideal order, based not on the logical positivism of the modern age but on the forgotten realm of analogy and correspondence. [3]

Recognizing here the influence of the modernist construct of history in which contingent, local circumstances collapse into a grand narrative of community, detractors of this position have been quick to attack this methodology as one putting forward an ideological agenda masquerading as historical truth. So, Catherine Belsey, as a British academician trying to rout out the Leavis-Eliot influence, detects behind the invocation of history a move to suppress it by appealing to a grand narrative that shows that <u>in essence</u> things are as they have always been: "they constructed between them a lost Elizabethan utopia where thought and feeling were one, where the native rhythm of speech expressed in poetry the intuitive consciousness of

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[3] See Lewis Simpson's discussion of historicism and new criticism in <u>The Possibilities of Order: Cleanth Brooks and His Work</u>.

an organic community, and everyone recognised in the principle of order the necessity of submission to the proper authorities, social and divine" (17).

And Paul Bove, in Destructive Poetics, attacks the modernist poetry of Eliot and Pound and the new critical practice of Cleanth Brooks as an almost conspiratorial attempt to "replace history with the Image of history": "The poetic image of the Ideal put forward as the Word, the autotelic ironic poem, is offered as an alternative not only to positivistic actuality but to all historical and temporal actuality as well" (65) But this is not a question of historical criticism versus anti-historical criticism; rather, it is a situation or, as Timothy Bahti says in another context, "a battle between theoretical reflection and interpretive practice . . . fought within a conventional opposition between history and the non-historical" (32). Bove's fight is to effect a "critical destruction of the Modern critical mind" and to replace it with a Heideggerean hermeneutic; Belsey's is to integrate Foucauldian strategies into a Marxist historicism.

To call formalist historicism non-historical is to invoke a different view of history. The word "history," as Jonathan Culler has observed, is a powerful trope in its appeal to the real, and thus serves as a powerful polemical cudgel. To devalue the material aspects of history is only

to choose another view of the past. Appeal to history becomes an appeal to Reality. One may object to the New Critics' aesthetic view of history, but again, one may not call it non-historical. To return to the issue of war, they do deal with the war; they simply abstract its contingent, contemporary facts into a trope that figures the spiritual collapse of the civitas, the fragmentation of the mind of Europe into a symbol for the disorders of history as opposed to the order of myth conferred by the aesthetic.

In the last two decades, criticism of Eliot's poetry, and especially of the early poetry, has veered away from the public toward the private. The reasons for this shift are numerous. Among them are the publication of the manuscripts of The Waste Land, in which both editorial comment and textual evidence focused on the private theme, as well as the simply practical reason of critical exhaustion with allusion-chasing and the futile search for some external referent that would provide narrative order to what appeared to be a web of fragments that veiled some hidden agenda. One contributing factor may have been the increasing impatience with Eliot's domination over letters for so many decades and the related need to subvert the prominence of a poet one unhappy Jacobin would call "an impressive catastrophe from which we may hope eventually to

recover" (Martin 12). And one common strategy of subjugation is the post-mortem exhumation of a poet's "personal demons," of compulsions, obsessions and idiosyncracies.

A less polemical influence, however, has been the integration of Eliot's poetry into the Romantic lyrical tradition and its valorization of the symbol as a mode of transcendence of the conflict between the fixity of concept and the dispersion of private emotion and sensation. While early critics grounded their readings on the cultural concerns of modernist rhetoric, critics of the last two decades have grounded their readings on the epistemological anxieties of modernist rhetoric. Working under the guidelines of Eliot's doctrine of the objective correlative and the adequation of personal emotion to impersonality of form, critics have concentrated on the "element of deep personal emotion" (Moody 47) and on the struggle to transmute private emotion into an aesthetic form that in its impersonality expresses a permanent truth about the life of the individual. Presenting "a consciousness aware of its own inner divisions," the poems become a series of textual strategies to organize, control, and transcend dueling psychic forces.

Unified by a common concern with the psychology of the lyric voice, critics generally disagree only in regard to

whether the poetry is perceived as succeeding in its goal. While many critics read the poetry as a space of freedom in which aesthetic form provides an avenue to self-integration, others, assuming the same private concern, disallow any such valorization of aesthetic form, arguing that the poetry takes place within the play of psychic oppositions. These conflicts have been discussed in numerous ways: conflict between the rational and active will and the intuitive passive self; between sexual desire and the opposing need for order and self-restraint; between romantic terror and yearning and intellectual detachment. The context for such polarities is most often posited as the split in Eliot's work between the symbolist strain which struggles to effect an autotelic poetry, reaching the condition of music, and the classical strain, which in search of moral and ontological fixity, struggles to express or objectify the depths of the buried self.[4]

The context of war, specifically of the Second World War, is usually brought in to point to the contrast between the brutality of the contemporary crisis and Eliot's figuration of war in the Four Quartets--a figuration attacked as either an escapist or irresponsible assimilation of a grave public situation into private

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[4] See Stead, Bergonzi, Bornstein, Moody, Traversi, Bush, Spurr.

concerns. Bernard Bergonzi, discussing Eliot's failure to engage truly the immediacy of history in the Quartets, complains that "one sees little sign of the events of 1940, the year of Dunkirk, the fall of France and the Battle of Britain" (151). Graham Martin also attacks the figuration of war in "Little Gidding" as an irresponsible refusal to grapple meaningfully with the specific crisis at hand: "The London blitz is merely assimilated (though brilliantly) to the private theme; and in 1942 who but Eliot would be likely to have felt drawn away from the contemporary crisis by the 'antique drum' of Charles the Martyr's confrontation with Oliver Cromwell?" (19) And recently, M.L. Rosenthal, in a reference to the famous "l'entre deux guerres" passage of "East Coker" and to the Krishna-Arjuna section of "Dry Salvages," objects: "World War II had been under way for almost two years, and perhaps the military phrasing sprinkled through the passage suggests a twitch of stimulus to respond. . . Given the realities of the war and of Nazi behavior, though, neither passage can be taken seriously in this sense. The one combines personal self-pity with a poet-workman's complaint about his medium. The other talks of a 'field of battle' almost incidentally, and hardly in terms relevant to blitzkrieg and genocide" (1043).

Once again, we find evidence of the current irritability with a poetry that seems to eschew political

and moral relevance, that seems to refuse "historical engagement" in favor of private concerns. But, underpinning Rosenthal's demand for a public stance, for a certain moral responsibility is something else. The particular irritant is not the unsuitability of war's being the subject of lyrical treatment but the unsuitability of war's being used to ground and to figure lyrical anxieties--a figuration that suggests that Eliot irresponsibly and perversely extorts a situation of collective suffering for his own mandarin needs, instead of properly integrating his private concern into a level of generality that would speak to the historical crisis at hand. Indeed, these objections reflect an underlying, normative expectation of the proper relation of the lyric to the subject of war--an expectation arising from the presence of a new genre, namely that of "war poetry." Rosenthal's objection, grounded as it is by generic assumptions of what poetry in a time of war should do, interestingly exposes a problem concerning the relation between a poetics of private experience and the historical pressure of war, a problem that the Eliot passages self-consciously generate. But since Rosenthal's objection, not to mention Eliot's own text, arises out of the presence of war poetry, we must investigate the criteria of the modern war lyric so as to understand the implications of the radical intrusion of

figures of war into a text that appears to be concerned solely with an internal struggle between language and experience; for although war poetry and modernist poetry have been conveniently separated as categories of critical discussion, such a distinction should not obscure the fact that both endeavors, however different in styles, theories, or response, confront a similar problem: What is the proper relation between poetry and war in a time when literary representation, in its pursuit of Reality, is forced to grapple with a fact that threatens not only the validity of any literary endeavor but the validity of the concept of civilization?

It would be Henry James, in his characteristic prophetic omniscience, who would early in the Great War perceive its implications for literary effort, and who not only expressed the moral shock of the situation but also predicted what would be an ongoing question for the rest of the century. In the often-quoted "war letter" to Howard Sturgis, written on the heels of England's declaration of war, James would first observe the war as a betrayal of history:

> The plunge of civilization into this abyss of blood and darkness by the wanton feat of those two infamous autocrats is a thing that so gives away the whole long age during which we have supposed the world to be, with whatever abatement, gradually bettering, that to have to take it all now for what the treacherous years

> were all the while making for and meaning is too tragic for words. (384)

Then, six months later, he would write of the problem of the artist struggling to reflect adequately contemporary reality in a universe where the very appeal to Reality necessarily becomes implicated in a delusion:

> The subject-matter of one's effort has become itself utterly treacherous and false--its relation to reality utterly given away and smashed. Reality is a word that was to be capable of this--and how represent that horrific capability, historically latent, historically ahead of it? How on the other hand not represent it either--without putting into play mere fiddlesticks? (446)

Robert Spoo, in an essay on James Joyce's treatment of the War in Ulysses, paraphrases James's question: "how write a novel about the modern world, with men and women as we know them, without somehow figuring the war into the account? There is no going back, James feels, no blinking at the facts, for we know what we know. . . . How represent such a nightmare as the one that has descended upon us? Which window of the House of Fiction will give properly onto this scene?" (149) But the troubled how's of James's passage further imply a certain hopelessness at finding such a window, since they reveal an anxiety at finding the possible point of contact between imaginative structures and a historical reality harboring such barbarism.

We will find a related anxiety if we turn to the attempt by both war poets and editors of war poetry collections to establish the legitimacy of this genre,[5] a tension between the attempt to define the parameters of the true war poem on the basis of authenticity and realism and the simultaneous attempt to prevent the poem's being categorized by its very theme. Collections of war poetry today fill library shelves, holding within their covers selections from writers as diverse as Euripides, Horace, Emerson, Plath, and Jonson, a miscellany claiming a universality for the genre as if, since war seems to have always been with us, the title "war poetry" would hold all poetry ostensibly concerned with war. But "war poetry" is a quite modern phenomenon, arising with the first modern war, the Civil War, and developing during World War I by means of the efficient linking of the English literary establishment to the propaganda machinery demanded by modern warfare (See Wright 70-100). Yet to speak of "war poetry" is not to invoke the carefully orchestrated, ideological defense of Britain by such men of letters as

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[5] See, for example, Poems of War and Battle, ed. Vere Henry Collins (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1914); The Oxford Book of War Poetry, ed. Jon Stallworthy (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1984); War and the Poet, ed. Richard Eberhart and Selden Rodman (New York: Devin-Adair Co., 1945); The War Poets, ed. Oscar Williams (Miami, Fla.: Granger Books, 1945); A Treasury of British War Poetry (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1917).

Newbolt, Kipling or Bridges but to invoke the poetry of what John Pudney has called "the modern legend of the War Poet"--the war lyrics of writer-combatants--Brooke, Jones, Owen, Sassoon, and others--that would continue even into the war poetry of World War II, a legend whose anatomy has been so carefully studied by Paul Fussell in The Great War and Modern Memory.

The war poetry of the writer-combatants was new because its joining of the lyric impulse to the personal experience of the brutal conditions made any grand treatment either obsolete or obscene. Neither glorifying war nor nations, the modern war poem substitutes personal expression for public declamation, authentic experience being thought more deeply true than the grand abstractions of public forms and themes. Wilfred Owen would be the first to mark this effort to distance the war poem from patriotic versification: "This book is not about heroes. English Poetry is not yet fit to speak of them. Nor is it about deeds, or lands, nor anything about glory, honour, might, majesty, dominion, or power, except War. Above all I am not concerned with Poetry. My subject is War, and the pity of War. The Poetry is in the pity" (31). Poetry, if it is to be a "true commentary on war," is to speak of the tragedy of immediate occasion, is to be honest in its elegy, satire, irony, or pathos. The numbing dimension of

modern war is perceived as too large for adequate treatment or, as Thomas Hardy thought, as too tragic, the only alternative being "to provide footnotes, the small, detailed cameos of our own experience" (qtd. in Williams 19). To grasp the tragedy of war is to grasp it emotionally, the criterion being, according to Mark Van Doren, "a matter of registering experience and feeling" (Williams 20).

This high value placed on authenticity of experience leads quickly enough to the distinction between the combatant and noncombatant and, on the part of the combatant, an ensuing distrust of civilian war poetry, not only because civilians tended to write the patriotic "buck-me-up," but also because the civilian could not possibly render the authentic experience of war and at worst, would, according to Frederic Prokosch, render a "form of compensation for the sense of guilt deriving from inaction, a luxuriant steambath of second hand and third-hand emotion" (Williams 19). Ezra Pound himself, searching for a way to set down "real war emotion," would be troubled by the doubt that the non-combatant could ever come close to the kind of authenticity needed to avoid either commercial opportunism or literary falsity (See Longenbach Stone Cottage 105-34). The problem for the combatant was to write of the war experience authentically without

pandering to the public desire for vicarious titillation or inspirational moralizing.

Alongside this growing definition of the "true war poem," there is in many of the same prefaces to war poetry collections a curious reluctance to admit any necessary relation between war and poetry. In defense of poetry's autonomy, primacy is denied to the conditions of war and their influence upon the creation of the genre. An appeal is made to the "spiritual" or "general" and thus atemporal qualities of art, seeking to distance art both from the collective cry for inspirational war poetry and from the authentic particularities of barbarism. The appeal is common and is made along two overlapping fronts: 1) war, which is essentially destructive, is antithetical to art, which is essentially creative -- John Berryman: "I should be sorry if the relation between one of man's most destructive and witless activities and one of his most purely and intelligently creative activities should seem to be very close or satisfactory" (Williams 29). 2) War, since it is merely a subject, neither encourages great poetry, nor makes great poets. Although war and its conditions provide matter for the poem, poetry, "a complex essential operation of the spirit" (Eberhart), in its pursuit of a level of generality transcends its subject matter, thus making war irrelevant to its essence.

George Herbert Clarke, writing in a preface to a volume of war poetry in 1917, affirms that "the first duty of the war-poet toward his art is to be a poet, to discover the timeless and placeless in the momentary and parochial, and to bring back to us a true and moving report of the experience and behaviour of the human spirit during its recurrent struggle with its own worser self" (35). And, Henry Treece, ringing the same changes in 1945, affirms that "War, as I see it here and now, is not the material of poetry. Lasting poetry must go down deeper than the superficial appearances of war machines; it must seek out the spirit of man in pain and glory, and must express that spirit and that pain and that glory in simple terms, in those fundamental statements to which the mechanisms of contemporary warfare are irrelevant" (Williams 24).

If we turn to T. S. Eliot's only public statement concerning the relation of war to poetry, a brief essay written in 1942, we will find him making many of the same points, arguing for the essential independence of poetry as poetry from the influence of the "shock of war" or the collective demands of patriotism ("Wartime" 351). Differences arise, however, from his assumed position of authority and from his characteristic use of irony to reinforce that position. Writing neither as a "war poet" nor as an editor, his critical pre-eminence conspicuous,

Eliot, the "Elder Statesman of Poetic Revolution,"[6] speaks from the Republic of Letters on a provincial matter, whose issues have been clouded by insufficient grounding in the essential elements of Art. The title of the essay, "T. S. Eliot on Poetry in Wartime," itself testifies to this role, as does Eliot's bland, ironic tone of genial equanimity. Eliot's irony tells more pointedly, however, in its dismissiveness: characteristically, he takes a question and, instead of answering it, forms it into another question by turning the possible responses into dichotomies, which, once placed within the context of the new question, are nullified by being shown to be inadequate. The original question, ethical in nature--how should poetry be written in a time of war?--produced two responses, those of inspirational public poetry and the private war lyric. Eliot renders both irrelevant by posing a new question, aesthetic in nature--is the poetry of war necessarily a better type of poetry?

Answering the public's outcry for an inspirational war poetry, Eliot criticizes the notion that war necessarily produces a great poetry. During time of war, he says, there are two types of "war poetry": patriotic poetry "which

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[6] The label is Kenner's, one which Eliot would have approved given his response to one interviewer, "One seems to become a myth, a fabulous creature that doesn't exist."

expresses and stimulates pride in the military virtues of a people" and a private poetry that arises out of an individual's experience of war, a poetry usually of "lament, involving pity and regret . . . involving issues of threat to liberty, sorrow at defeat, or indignation" or of "some limited experience, even trivial experience such as cold, discomfort, or the boredom." As for the first type, the patriotic, there is no historical example of a great poetry:

> The greatest war poem of Europe is Homer's Iliad: it was not written during the Trojan War; and, although Homer was a Greek, I think that he makes the Greeks appear rather more unpleasant than the Trojans. Dante, no doubt was passionately devoted to his native Florence, and he certainly lived through a period of disorder; but I think that his love of Florence is revealed not by recital of her martial glories, but by his vehement lament over her corruption. At the time of the Napoleonic Wars, both Wordsworth and Goethe were living and working: neither of them can be accused of lack of public spirit, but neither is conspicuous for having made poetry out of the wars of his time . . . There is no first-rate poem about the victory over the Armada or the Battle of Trafalgar.

Conceding that patriotism supplies the emotional center for much of the work of Shakespeare and Milton, Eliot points out that their poetry did "not need the shock of war to set it to work." If the poet feels any duty as poet, it is toward his language, to preserve and to enrich the heritage. Conceding, too, that many good poems have been written by soldiers on the World War I front and that

during the current war, poets in military service write from the context of war, Eliot states that the poems are most often expressions of some limited personal experience, even trivial experience, rather than expressions of the large experience of war itself. "You cannot understand war--with the kind of understanding needed for writing poetry . . . while you are in the midst"; it must "become part of a man's whole past," and if it is to "bear fruit" in poetry, "it is likely to bear fruit in something very different from what, during time of war, people call 'war poetry'" (351). The fall of Dunkirk, blitzkrieg--the extreme pressure of the contemporaneous--must be collapsed into a larger "life."

And, in a poem written the same year, entitled "A Note on War Poetry," Eliot repeats the argument of the essay:

Not the expression of collective emotion
Imperfectly reflected in the daily papers.
Where is the point at which the merely individual
Explosion breaks

In the path of an action merely typical
To create the universal, originate a symbol
Out of the impact? This is a meeting
On which we attend

Of forces beyond control by experiment--
Of Nature and the Spirit. Mostly the individual
Experience is too large, or too small. Our emotions
Are only 'incidents'

In the effort to keep day and night together.
It seems just possible that a poem might happen

To a very young man: but a poem is not poetry--
That is a life.

War is not a life: it is a situation,
One which may neither be ignored nor accepted,
A problem to be met with ambush and stratagem,
Enveloped and scattered.

The enduring is not a substitute for the transient,
Neither one for the other. But the abstract conception
Of private experience at its greatest intensity
Becoming universal, which we call 'poetry',

May be affirmed in verse.

Yes--Poetry, that abstract, hence universal conception of private experience, that transubstantiation of historicity, that symbolically enclosed autotelic world. But the rhetorical praxis of the poem in its figuration of war to express the nature of the poetic act subverts this proposition by relating the violence of war to the violence of symbolic enclosure, a violence that motivates the displacement of history not because of some fastidious disdain for the quotidian but because of an anxiety arising from this equation of destruction with the synthesizing structures of the poetic act.

But, how <u>exactly</u> is war figured in this poem? Through a figural ambiguity, of which an analysis may not only do much to clarify this poem but may also provide a basis by which to discuss how war figures in Eliot's work as a whole. In the discussion that follows, the terms

metaphorical and metaphor refer not to metaphor as a generic term denoting any figural relation, but rather metaphor as one of the so-called four major tropes, as defined by Kenneth Burke in A Grammar of Motives (503-17). If the figure of war is metaphorical, that is, if it is based on resemblance, then the argument is as follows:

The writing of poetry is like the waging of war because they are both agonistic acts. Poetry here is a war between the abstract and the particular, a struggle to achieve the symbol, the form of mediation. For Eliot, this process of mediation is violent, thus the tropic use of war. The transformation of the merely individual and the merely typical into the universal is like an explosion breaking in a path of action. If one rearticulates the opposites of individual and universal in terms of the religious opposites of Nature and Spirit, the process of incarnation (or if one prefers, of "totalization") is cast in a context of a violent meeting of forces, which we "attend upon," in the military sense of accompanying or waiting upon an enemy for hostile purposes. But if we are in attendance, our attendance is somehow inadequate, for this meeting is beyond our "control by experiment," experiment in the sense of any empowered action of testing, but also experiment in its archaic sense of experience. Next to the mysterious and uncontrollable meeting of Nature

and Spirit, the individual experience is either too large or too small. Introducing the psychological counterpart to the above dichotomies of individual and typical, Nature and Spirit, Eliot posits the struggle of the experiential self to maintain some continuity, from moment to moment, from day to night, as a military effort, but only a small one, only one incident in a campaign of forces beyond apprehension or control. This is not to say that one poem may not arise out of one experience, or one incident, but, as Eliot always maintained, the writing of a poem is distinct from the achievement of poetry: one is transient, the other, which is a "life," is enduring.

Yet to read the figural relation of Eliot's poem this way, solely in terms of metaphor, would be to ignore the primary focus, which is not the writing of poetry in general, but the writing of poetry in the specific context <u>of</u> war or the writing of poetry <u>about</u> war--a focus suggesting relations of metonymy. Metonymy, often described as the part standing for the whole, is a figure in which one phenomenon is substituted for another that stands in close relation. While the metaphorical relationship is one based on the shared property of two elements, or one could say on a common predicate, the metonymic relation is one of contiguity, an extrinsic relation, whether causal or material, so that the effect could stand for the cause, the

agent for the effect, the inventor for the invented, the container for the contained. Thus the properties of war can become metonymical substitutions for the activity of poetry since war is the literal context or even motivation and hence material cause for the writing of poetry. When Eliot writes

> Where is the point at which the merely individual
> Explosion breaks
>
> In the path of an action merely typical
> To create the universal, originate a symbol
> Out of the impact?

the relation between the destructive and the creative is not an "as if," since the context concerns the poet writing in wartime, where explosions do break in paths of action and where a poet writing a poem about a battle may struggle to originate a symbol out of the impact. A poet may find himself writing in a time of war, and he may write about war from experience; so, a state of chance juxtaposition between the life of a man suffering a time of war and the life of a poet writing in a time of war may exist. The metonymic relation of war to poetry, because based on extrinsic relations, excludes any necessary influence or equation between the two, for the part-to-part relations of metonymy are never based on a shared quality or intrinsic connection. This would seem to explain the implication of

uncertainty and hazard of the phrases "Where is the point . . . ," "it seems just possible," "a poem might happen."

Nevertheless, the very fact that a figural relation exists at all demands more than metonymy. So, interpretation vacillates between the extrinsic relation of contiguity and an inclusive relation of resemblance, a vacillation between difference and identity that can be explained by the fact that as Gerard Genette maintains, "every metonymy can be converted into a synecdoche by appeal to a higher totality" (109). Both metonymy and synecdoche involve relations between parts to wholes (whether metonymy is a form of synecdoche, or synecdoche a special function of metonymy depends upon which rhetorician one reads), but while metonymy is always a reduction of either a whole to one of its parts or the reduction of one part to the status of another part, synecdoche assumes an intrinsic relationship of shared essence so that, to refer to Hayden White's definition, two parts are constructed "in the manner of an integration within a whole that is qualitatively different from the sum of the parts and of which the parts are but microcosmic replications" (35). If metonymy reduces, synecdoche represents so that either side of an equation may represent the other. In synecdoche, the relation between the literal and the tropic are compatible because they "belong" to each other. Thus, in Eliot's

poem, the ambiguity of figural intention arises out of the fluctuation between metonymic and synecdochic relations. The whole process of mediation of the dichotomies of experience, which involves both the struggle with language or the formal to embody the experiential or the particular, is reduced to the activity of war. At the same time, there is an opposite movement toward integration. If to represent synecdochically is to suggest an organic belonging, then the analogical drive to integrate particular phenomena into a meaningful totality is an act of power, the shared ontology of poetry and war.

After the fourth stanza, the figural relation between war and poetry abruptly stops, and two stanzas, completely discrete, follow, one on the situation of war, the other on the entelechy of poetry:

> War is not a life: it is a situation,
> One which may neither be ignored nor accepted,
> A problem to be met with ambush and stratagem,
> Enveloped and scattered.
>
> The enduring is not a substitute for the transient,
> Neither one for the other. But the abstract
> conception
> Of private experience at its greatest intensity
> Becoming universal, which we call 'poetry',
>
> May be affirmed in verse.

Now there is no participation, no shared ontology; now the only relation between poetry and war is difference: "That [Poetry] is a life/ War is not a life."

The alignment of life and poetry against war and situations depends upon an underlying distinction between, on the one hand, history defined as mere events, chronological bits, relative positions and sets of circumstances, particular or striking complexes relative to context and, on the other, "life" as a transhistorical reality of lived, shared experience, the "Erlebnis" of modern historicism, that deeper reality made up of the experience of humankind considered independent of particular changes in time and location. Poetry embodies this "life" and as such seems to have a moral function in its expression of an independence from a historical situation antithetical to its and our "life." Once again, we seem to have the traditional view of aesthetic formalism, which insists on the separation of history and art. Although this retreat from figuration may result from anxiety, from a need to invalidate the real and threatening proximity of war to art suggested by the figuration, we are told that war is not a situation to be ignored or accepted, that it is to be met with "ambush and stratagem,/ Enveloped and scattered." Art denies its kinship to war and defensively responds by attempting to absorb into itself the violence of history.

The "contact," however, between this formal violence of poetry, scattering and ambushing, and the violence of

history is subverted by the retreat from figuration of war into the serene detachment of the last stanza. The last stanza concludes the poem's appeal to the wholeness of a life somehow completed in its seamlessness yet unfinalized, a wholeness that stands in opposition to the broken bits of "situation," a conclusion which points to the life-enhancing, history-denying properties of the symbolic order. Thus, the interrelationship of temporal counters throughout the poem is significant. The daily chronicles, individual actions and transient situations are points of contact, necessary counterpoints to the universal, enduring, or typical occurrences of life; poetic discourse, an inevitable fugue of time. Poetry is to participate in a generality, not of the "collective" will, but a generality effected by a descent into individuation, the "intensity" of which culminates in a condition of universality which meshes all incongruities into the "life" of the symbol, a life above a life. Here times, customary tenses, are abstracted, by means of the symbol, not into eternity but into some absolute time of ideal conditions, its tenses formed by, but independent of, the histories of past and present. Notwithstanding, the cynical tone of the last line's "<u>may</u> be affirmed in verse" and the switch from the august "Poetry" to the mundane "verse" mark the tenuousness of affairs here.

As we have seen, the poem's figuration of war both absorbs war into the terms of art and reduces art to war, much like Wittgenstein's box, which, depending on the trick of the eye, can be solid, lidless, open, or not a box at all ("the text interprets the illustration every time") (3e). Depending on how one reads Eliot's figural trick, the poem either metonymically glosses the war poet question or metaphorically "collapses" the subject of war into a seemingly distinct concern, yet it is the synecdochic hinge of the vacillation itself that exposes the broader and inclusive concern, the relation of the aesthetic to the historical, and the necessity of writing modernity--modernity understood not as a historical but as an aesthetic and normative concept--a distinction first artistically realized by Baudelaire, whose opposition of modernité (roughly equivalent to DeMan's impulse of modernity as discussed earlier) to historical modernity resonates behind Eliot's "conflict" of dichotomies, not to mention behind the theories of the genre of war poetry.

Baudelaire, achieving almost a mythic status as the originator of the modern, the discoverer of "l'avenement du neuf," recognized what Matei Calinescu describes as a split in the concept of modernity into aesthetic modernity and historical modernity, a fissure coming out of a profound historical relativism (40). Historical modernity is the

period we associate with bourgeois culture, its comprehensive technological revolutions, its values of pragmatism, reason, action, success and progress. Aesthetic modernity, also based on sweeping historical change arising and sometimes synonymous with romanticism, involves the aesthetics of transitoriness and immanence, whose values revolve around novelty produced by change, its goal the formal seizure of presentness. More of an achieved condition than a period concept, aesthetic modernity takes as its stimulus and raison d'etrê an intractable opposition to past tradition, to bourgeois modernity, and sometimes even to itself because of its own inescapable dependence on historical modernity. The challenge of modernity entails several problems: 1) how to express the newness of the present without basing the aesthetic upon socio-historical conditions whose values are inimical to it; 2) how to make the brutality of modern life poetic, the banal heroic, the sordid mysterious; 3) how to keep the independence and stability afforded by tradition but not its claims of an abstract academicism and at the same time be true to the transitory nature of the moment without falling into mere fashion (what DeMan calls the ashes of a true modernity).

Baudelaire's solution to this problem of alienation both from an oppressive past and a sordid present is his

concept of modernité set forth in "Le Peintre de la vie moderne." A quick paraphrase of his argument will show how Eliot's poem plays off of its terms. He argues that every artistic creation must combine the "eternal" and the "immutable" with the "transitory," the "fugitive" and the "contingent," must distill the permanent from the ever-changing present in order to extract from fashion the "poetry which lives in the historical" (13). Allegiance first belongs to the purity of instantaneity, grasped through the force of imagination, a modernité of such precision that the veneer of conventional reality cracks, allowing the artistic eye to go beneath the banality of observable appearances to a reality where the ephemeral and the eternal are one. Much more than a claim for the validity of modern subjects (that being an old song since the fifth century), Baudelaire's emphasis on the sordid and the brutal was to lead through the alchemy of art to the poetic, for the act of modernité must take place along the pressure points of the antithetic--the general-particular, sensory-ideal, spiritual-material--not reconciling oppositions into a higher synthesis but through the acute play on contrast, forcing a transient and mystical transformation of reality into a more real reality. Ever grounded in the consciousness of the irreversibility of time, modernité becomes an act, both normative and heroic,

whose exercise must be repeated with each successive generation. Matei Calinescu describes this ongoing attempt to reconcile permanence and change, the past and present as "the paradoxical possibility of going beyond the flow of history through the consciousness of historicity in its most concrete immediacy, in its presentness." He continues, "Aesthetically speaking, 'the eternal half of beauty' (consisting of the most general laws of art) can be brought to a fleeting life (or afterlife) only through the experience of modern beauty. In its turn, modern beauty is included in the transhistorical realm of values--it becomes 'antiquity'--but only at the price of renouncing any claim to serve as a model . . . Separated from tradition . . . . artistic creation becomes an adventure and a drama" (50).

Certainly Eliot would not use the term "modern" or any other words fallen from its tree with the veneration of the time, yet oddly enough, Eliot's idiosyncratic use of the words "tradition," "classicism," and the "historical sense" would carry very much the same intimations as Baudelaire's modernité. However polemical in context, each term in some way would point to some adequation of the present to the past. Historians of English modernism have shown how Eliot's contribution to early modernism was his strategic use of values deemed corruptive and repressive such as tradition, rhetoric, and impersonality to effect the avant-

garde values of originality, authenticity and radicalism. So Eliot's early prose revolves around paradoxes: the anti-rhetorical poetry of free verse will end up in a "vicious rhetoric," to write only of the contemporary will be to end up "in obsolescence," and only through the threat of the conventional or of rhetorical difficulty can the effect of sincerity be given. Beneath the strategic and practical uses of such ironism lay the realization of the supple paradoxes of modernity. To appear most contemporary, a tradition must be created that would offer on the surface the legitimacy of orthodoxy yet be available for the opposition, appropriation or revision of the present. The invention, reclaiming, and propagation of genealogies would offer the suppleness required of a tradition that would be static, yet changing, multivocal yet unified by the local point of appropriation in the present. So Baudelaire's <u>modernité</u>, "a poetry which lives in the historical," would become Eliot's "historical sense": "This historical sense, which is a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal and of the timeless and of the temporal together, is what makes a writer traditional. And it is at the same time what makes a writer most acutely conscious of his place in time, of his contemporaneity" ("Tradition" 37). To be conscious of one's place in time, to be able to locate the demarcations

of the permanent and the transient involves the fictive assumption of an Archimedean point, a neutral point of observation, independent of the obfuscations of language and experience. Indeed, Jeffrey Perl notes Eliot's assumption in his essays "of a vantage point outside of tradition, or more specifically at the end of one. . . the belief that the late-modern vantage point makes visible, for the first time, the curve of modern history" (69). The ideal of mythic consciousness, the ability to hold the contingencies of history within an enclosure of form that would allow for the independence of observation and at the same time for the meaningfulness of experience--thus Eliot's "note" can be read as an attempt to find that "point" ("Where is the point at which the merely individual..."), the figure of war being merely an available, if not cliched, trope for transforming the private specificities of experience into the general and impersonal form of the symbol. And indeed, the few critics who have mentioned this poem usually quote only the last stanza without any discussion of its context of war poetry. However, it is the very subject of war poetry specifically that identifies the necessity of writing modernity underlying the "conflict" of dichotomies.

In the attempt of war poetry to successfully present the immediate experience of war in all its novel misery

without losing a transhistorical value that asserted the independence of human experience over and against history, it duplicated the exigencies of aesthetic modernity. In turn, Eliot's figuration of war duplicates the modernist appropriation of history through formal strategies that seek not so much to displace as to master, and in mastering, to articulate its own authentic stance. But this "stance" of observation, if you will, is compromised by the intersection of the narrative violence of history and the violence of form, for the cutting through of the boundaries between experience and form, of action and observation, of history and poetry, which the figuration of war allows, raises the question: when poetry attempts to absorb the violent dislocations of history, will it succeed in eradicating them, in transcending them, or will it simply internalize them, thereby manifesting in its own tangle of linguistic structures (as indeed the "Note" has done) the very dislocations it sought to dissipate?

In 1921, after attending the London premiere of Stravinsky's Le Sacré du Printemps, Eliot, echoing Baudelaire's claim for the "heroism of modern life," praised Stravinsky's endeavor "to transform the rhythm of the steppes into the scream of the motor horn, the rattle of machinery, the grind of wheels, the beating of iron and steel, the roar of the underground railway, and the other

barbaric cries of modern life; and to transform these despairing noises into music" ("London Letter" [Oct.] 452). But what of the barbaric cries of total war that would make two sweeps during Eliot's career? Anything other than to observe them first-hand would result in their being transformed into a poetry resisting that "horrific capability" of history James pointed to. In the poems "Gerontion," The Waste Land, and Four Quartets, war does not remain neatly pinned against the background wall of context, delegated to act like Eliot's favorite ghost behind the arras who menacingly moves forward when the back is turned, only to disappear once again behind the arras when confronted. Rather, figures of war "break" into the texts, exposing the antagonism between the poet's modernity and the text that is history. The very presence of war does not so much complicate this writing of modernity as to hold it hostage to what it seeks to resist--that its very resistance to history is itself a symptom of its own complicity.

CHAPTER TWO

"GERONTION": THE THEATRICS OF WAR

The voice of "Gerontion," a poem written during the same year as the Treaty of Versailles, does not seem to resist the "horrific capability" of history; it embraces it as fact, testifies to the incomprehensibility of historical processes, weaving out of the context of the profound psychological and physical shock of World War I a lamentation that draws its sustenance from the drama of its utterly defeated landscape. Its resistance, however, is to be found in the alliance of eloquence and defeat that serves to displace the reality of war by a figural merging of literary discourse and war.

In 1943, Yvor Winters described "Gerontion" as a "portrait of an individual from whom grace has been withdrawn, and who is dying of spiritual starvation while remembering his past." Since then, most commentators have read "Gerontion," despite its radical innovations in poetic form, as a continuation of the tradition of the dramatic monologue--in which a speaker or character speaks to the reader, expressing a particular narrative theme--and much energy has been spent in the search for historical and

literary personages who may have inspired Eliot's creation. A. C. Benson's Fitzgerald, Tennyson's Ulysses, the biblical Samson, and even William Butler Yeats have all been successfully argued for, but none more convincingly than for the Henry Adams of Eliot's review of The Education, written, enticingly enough, during the same period that Eliot was at work on "Gerontion."

There Eliot attacked Adams as a product of the New England mind, in love with the operations of its doubt yet bound by the demands of a conscience weakened by a pervasive moral debility. Eliot says of Adams, whom he saw bewildered yet captivated by skepticism, "Wherever this man stepped, the ground did not simply give way, it flew into particles; towards the end of his life, he came across the speculations of Poincaré, and Science disappeared, entirely. He was seeking for education, with the wings of a beautiful but ineffectual conscience beating in a vacuum jar" (362). So the cold and arid movement of Gerontion's skepticism seems to generate the "fractured atoms," like the wind that blows through the poem, withering everything in its midst into the hollowness of despair. Like Gerontion who casts his mind upon an impenetrable and treacherous history searching for some order, Adams had attempted to find answers in history, trying to find a unifying principle that would generate some order out of what

appeared to be a numbing chaos, an attempt that failed, leaving him with "his historical neck broken," his mind waking "to find itself looking blankly into the void of death" (460).

Adams's pessimism Eliot considered the effect of a mind removed from experience, sterile in its self-absorption: "It is probable that men ripen best through experiences that are at once sensuous and intellectual; certainly many men will admit that their keenest ideas have come to them with the quality of a sense-perception; and that their keenest sensuous experience has been 'as if the body thought.' There is nothing to indicate that Adams's senses either flowered or fruited: he remains little Paul Dombey asking questions" (362). In light of this remark, Denis Donoghue reads Gerontion as "a fragmented figure in whom ideas have long since lost connection with the experience of smelling a rose; a figure spiritually febrile, vain enough to think that history must be corrupt and the world incomprehensible upon no better evidence than that his spiritual anomie requires these notions" (Reading 150). Suffering from what Ronald Bush calls a "sensory desiccation" ("I have lost my sight, smell, hearing, taste and touch:/How should I use them for your closer contact?"), Gerontion is a mind estranged from authentic experience, isolated from the sensory world, on the one

hand, divorced from "'what we really are and feel, what we really want, and what really excites our interests,' and, on the other, 'the real world'" (Bush 34). Bush, comparing him to Tennyson's Ulysses, writes that "Gerontion presents himself in a landscape transformed by his own isolation, a psychological terrain where things he once loved have cooled, diminished and turned into inconveniences" (34).

Because of his inability to make "contact" with experience, Gerontion's words are empty, "vacant shuttles weaving the wind," and it is this emptiness of rhetoric, unmoored from its proper object yet powerful in its evocation and self-deception, that seems clearly to be at the heart of the poem's method, which has been described as the construction of a theatre of words, built up by Gerontion to compensate for his deprivation from reality. The rich texture of allusion and pastiche owes its fabric to the words of Newman and Tennyson, Joyce, Adams, and James, Tourneur, Chapman, Middleton, Jonson and Shakespeare, Blake, Lancelot Andrewes, and Edward Fitzgerald through A.C. Benson; yet it is the Jacobean rhetoric that most supplies Gerontion with a way of escaping his own inability to act or to experience the "intelligence" of sense.

Eliot was, at the time, especially concerned with the moral implications of Jacobean rhetoric, specifically with

Senecan drama, that is, with its ability to use verbal artifice to displace reality and to deceive one into confusing the gesture for action, the pose for moral value. Senecan drama, with its emphasis on declamation rather than on action and thus "at one remove from reality," is "all in the word, and the word has no further reality behind it . . . the centre of value is shifted from what the personage says to the way in which he says it." In contrast, in Greek drama, "behind the drama of words is the drama of action, the timbre of voice and voice, the uplifted hand or tense muscle, and the particular emotion. The spoken play, the words which we read, are symbols . . . for the acted and felt play, which is always the real thing" ("Seneca" 7).

Gerontion displays no such "unity of thought and feeling, action and speculation" embodied in Greek drama; instead, he seems to be an expression of an ethic "which supplied the lack of moral habits by a system of moral attitudes and poses" ("Seneca" 13). So Gerontion's laments, his grievances and his supplications, made up as they are from the texture of Jacobean and Elizabethan rhetoric, are a "matter of postures" that weave the wind, seeking to fill the void. Denis Donoghue sees this attempt as a symptom of an egotism that "would issue in a self-regarding style, for which the readiest examples are available in Jacobean smoke and sulphur . . . Nearly any

smoke and sulphur would do, provided they provoked the vaunting eloquence which works as a substitute for the action it should accompany and define" (Reading 150). For Donoghue, Gerontion, "transfixed between a real action he is not resolute enough to take and the vacant gesture that mocks it" (Reading 147), is a figure embodying Eliot's "appalled sense . . . of the availability of words to provide us with specious worlds in which we may take refuge" (Reading 156). And take refuge he seems to through a process, so curious to Eliot, of self-dramatization--when a character in a play becomes for a short moment aware of himself as character, or as Eliot states in his essay "Rhetoric and Poetic Drama," sees himself in a dramatic light" (27). Eliot had Othello in mind and Othello's ability in his last speech to take refuge in his own dramatic efficacy, thus "cheering himself up" by "turning himself into a pathetic figure, by adopting an aesthetic rather than a moral attitude, dramatising himself against his environment. He takes in the spectator, but the human motive is primarily to take in himself" ("Shakespeare" 130-31). Spectator in his own theatre of words, Gerontion, through the force of his rhetoric, turns his impotence and deprivation into the conditions for his moral significance. The hero of his own insufficiency, his rhetoric is sufficient to charm and move, to weave specificities of

gesture that, because aesthetic in nature, can provide him with a gratification unavailable through action and genuine feeling.

Yet the self-consciousness necessary for his "own delectation" also provides an awareness of the inefficacy of his method, and the last passages of the poem are most often read as a failure of his role-playing to keep away the void into which the puppet-like De Bailache, Fresca, and Mrs. Cammel whirl--a vortex(t) in which the imaginary ship of his thoughts becomes caught, driven into the small corner reserved perhaps for the anonymous, most certainly the small corner of his own "dull head" from where he began, blowing into the husks of his own dry thoughts.

Thus, for many readers, Gerontion is both a bad poet and a bad historian, for this most unreliable of unreliable narrators embodies attitudes and methods censured by Eliot in his essays. Essay after essay attacking the excesses of rhetoric, the division of mind from experience and word from sense, and the failure to construct unifying wholes are assembled against the speaker of this poem. In his inability to unify the present and the past, Gerontion is considered both an "uncritical historian" and an "imperfect critic" (See Longenbach Modernist Poetics 189-93). His inability to impose, as Eliot puts it, "a credible order upon ordinary reality . . . thereby eliciting some

perception of an order in reality, to bring us to a condition of serenity, stillness, and reconciliation" marks him, for many readers, as a bad artist (OPP 94). But for Gerontion to be this "imperfect critic" of his times, one must assume a psychological and dramatic coherence, minimizing the subversion of the dramatic monologue's determinates of speaker, scene and narration.

The opening passage would seem to support a tangibility of voice and scene:

> Here I am, an old man in a dry month
> Being read to by a boy, waiting for rain.
> I was neither at the hot gates
> Nor fought in the warm rain
> Nor knee deep in the salt marsh, heaving a cutlass,
> Bitten by flies, fought.
> My house is a decayed house,
> And the jew squats on the window sill, the owner,
> Spawned in some estaminet of Antwerp,
> Blistered in Brussels, patched and peeled in London.
> The goat coughs at night in the field overhead;
> Rocks, moss, stonecrop, iron, merds.
> The woman keeps the kitchen, makes tea,
> Sneezes at evening, poking the peevish gutter.
> I an old man,
> A dull head among windy spaces.

The easy conversational tone of the opening gives a certain concreteness of scene, introduced by the solidness of the "Here," opposing where he was not. So an old man waiting for rain, being read to, meditates on the past, in some proximity to a decayed house which harbors both a mean domesticity and a servant who keeps the kitchen, while a goat coughs outside and the slumlord leans on the window

sill on a warm, dry night. Such a summary, however, is misleading, for the language contains strong, if indefinite, allegorical potentialities that choke off any such tangibility. The references to past wars, wrapped within the context of dryness and decay, as well as the linking of the contemporary commercial cities of Antwerp, Brussels, and London to an anti-Semitic cultural diagnosis, immediately conjure the recent war and its aftermath, Europe in 1919--politically ruined, spiritually confused, and growingly anti-Semitic, as indicated by the link between the jew and the debased commercialism symbolized by the capitals. The house is both the house of Europe and its mind; it is both mind and grave. The goat coughs overhead on a windy hill ("a windy knob") or as Capricorn, in constellated regions of the sky, suggesting an astrological disturbance in which rolls the catalogue of "Rocks, moss, stonecrop, merds." But disturbances here are grammatical. Gabriel Pearson marks how the "swift aggressive flurry of strong verbs" creates "an impression of inflicted retaliations . . . the 'Jew' placarded, as owner, on an appositional sill, being spattered, degraded and mutilated" ("T. S. Eliot" 87). Yet witness how the "blistered," "patched," and "peeled" can apply equally to the house or to the jew, and indeed the tonal qualities of the language here work beyond referential scope, achieving a "half-

life," somewhere between image and reference. The strange, cosmopolitan tableaux of the unidentified Mr. Silvero, Hakagawa, Madame de Tornquist and Fraulein von Kulp takes place not in the house of the opening scene but in some obscure sinister past, where insomnia and cultural faux-pas join the tryst and the seance to contribute to what Kenner calls an "epiphany of guilty terror" (Invisible 130). Meaning here is primarily the effect of a language of gesture: Erik Svarny notes that "phonetic and rhythmic effects" of the "Jonsonian 'humorous' naming" serve "to imply that these individuals have no particular significance beyond the rudimentary identity of the names they bear" (182). Any potential narrative function that they have is further arrested by the warp and weft of the parallel participles "Who walked .../ bowing .../ Shifting .../Who turned," turned indeed into "Vacant Shuttles [that] weave the wind."

By the end of the poem the scene will switch from cogitations in a "draughty house" to a farcical explosion of more "Jonsonian" characters whirling into the same universe where constellated goats once coughed and constellated bears now shudder, whirling above the sea, both ocean and gulf, where the old man, both an unfit mariner and gull, is driven by winds that are both warm

("the Trades") and cold ("feathers in the snow"), a universe of cartographical nonsense.

The instability of scene could be meliorated by the pattern of either a conversation or a meditation of a character, but along with the confusion of physical and mental landscapes, the speaker's dramatic coherence deteriorates, and the organizing principle of the verse paragraphs seems less a matter of a speaker's volition than of a figurative logic carried by the allusive properties of words, which seem to achieve an independent life of their own. Thus the anonymous Jacobean rhetoric that intrudes in the sixth verse paragraph--for example,

> Think at last
> I have not made this show purposelessly
> And it is not by any concitation
> Of the backward devils.
> I would meet you upon this honestly.
> I that was near your heart was removed therefrom
> To lose beauty in terror, terror in inquisition

--serves to distance and depersonalize, disconnecting the line between voice and speaker. So too the declarative sense of the lines on history is more a matter of rhythm than reference, for the rhythmic waves of sententiousness punctuated by Think's that can either hold the deliberateness of the imperative mood or be in the indicative, serve to undercut, if not obliterate, both a grammatical and a thinking subject. The disintegration of

the speaker into a multiplicity of verbal modes alerts us to the possibility that there is no real character here, no one with a determinate personal history. Hugh Kenner calls Gerontion an "auditory illusion within the confines of which the components of the poem circulate and co-exist" (Invisible 125). Any sense of personal coherence is for Kenner the result of "the uniquely specifying rhythms, the richly explicit verbs, the syntactic muscularity of a sequence of declarative sentences," which "expend themselves in weaving the wind, their intimate narrative energy handling any ambiguities, phantoms, footless metaphors" (Invisible 127). He further insists that "the sense of personal presence can at any moment be resolved into a purely technical management of stresses and caesurae" (Invisible 125). And more recently, John Riquelme has argued that the heterogeneity of the language counters any impression of personal voice that the opening introduces, for "The grammatical indeterminacy disturbs the statements' coherence in ways that resist resolution" (157). Regardless, it is difficult to give up the notion of a voice or a consciousness here. The "I" beckons toward us, simultaneously confessional and haughty; like the "I" of a medieval riddle, it gestures toward the allegorical plane, though frustrating any resolution into such stability. Accordingly, Riquelme notes the allegorical

tendency: "The language pertains not to a character whose name indicates that he is a person but to one who is named artificially. Like a figure in a medieval allegory whose name points to a concept that is abstract and general rather than personal and individual, Gerontion is not a person but one among many possible incarnations of the meaning of his name in Greek, 'little old man'" (157).

To be nothing more than an etymology, however, is to be a great deal. Serving as the title for a poem whose context is a war which effectively ended a phase of Western culture, whose "voice" typifies historical consciousness, and whose method, in its echoes of literary history, appears to embody historical remembrance itself, Gerontion seems to personify the mind of a culture; hence the customary suggestion that Gerontion implies the "Mind of Europe" or historical consciousness itself (which Nietzsche said was "a form of congenital grayheadedness"). The phrase "the Mind of Europe" was of course greatly utilized by the modernists. One such text, Paul Valery's "Letter from France: The Spiritual Crisis," not only represents the phrase's usefulness to its period but because of striking similarities both in terms of subject and exposition may just well be a major source for Eliot's poem and if so, may justify the allegorical insinuations of Gerontion as some aspect of the "Mind of Europe."

At the request of John Middleton Murry, Paul Valery wrote the essay to be published first in English in two parts for the Athenaeum. The first part, which bears more directly upon Eliot's "Gerontion," was published on April 11, 1919 and given Eliot's close relation with the journal, he may have read it shortly before or even upon commencement of the writing of the poem. There is indeed the similar complaint that can be found in so many contemporary works dealing with the war and its meaning -- the disillusionment with the myth of social evolution, the uncertainty about culture, and the accompanying fear of history being only a malign destiny. Yet there are correspondences of image and detail that seem to point to something more than just a shared milieu.

Valery begins his diagnosis of a European "crisis of mind" by first addressing the extraordinary realization: that Western culture may not be inherently privileged, but both the product and victim of "accident." Europe is figured as a great ship driven by the storms of war, soon to go down into history, here a deep sea-grave that already holds within its "obscure depths," the "phantoms of great ships laden with riches and intellect," other civilizations that now remind that "the abyss of history is deep enough to hold us all. . . . The circumstances that could send the works of Keats and Baudelaire to join the works of Menander

are no longer inconceivable; they are in the newspapers. . . . The most formidable and the best ordered can perish by accident" (182). Besides the fragility of culture, the war, according to Valery, disclosed the fraudulent claim of high culture to act as an unbroken continuum of intellectual power providing for increasing moral and material progress. The roles of the arts, sciences, and technology, as well as accepted moral categories, are neither civilizing nor edifying but instrumental in the slaughter that has taken place:

> The great virtues of the German people have begotten more evils, than idleness ever bred vices. With our own eyes, we have seen conscientious labor, the most solid learning, the most serious discipline and application adapted to appalling ends.
>
> So many horrors could not have been possible without so many virtues. Doubtless, much science was needed to kill so many, to waste so much property, annihilate so many cities in so short a time; but moral qualities in like number were also needed. Are Knowledge and Duty,then, suspect? (182)

Complementing the deadly possibilities of knowledge are the contradictions inherent in the "innumerable ways of thought, dogmas, philosophies, heterogenous ideals" that the European "mind" embraces in a desperate attempt to maintain "consciousness":

> While inventors were feverishly searching their imaginations and the annals of former wars for the means of doing away with barbed wire, of outwitting submarines or paralyzing the flight of airplanes, her soul was intoning at the same time all the incantations it ever knew, and giving serious consideration to the most bizarre prophecies; she

> sought refuge, guidance, consolation throughout the whole register of her memories, past acts, and ancestral attitudes. Such are the known effects of anxiety, the disordered behavior of a mind fleeing from reality to nightmare and from nightmare back to reality, terrified, like a rat caught in a trap. (182)

The source of disorder goes beyond the war to the intellectual disorder of modernity, which is "the free existence, in all her cultivated minds, of the most dissimilar ideas, the most contradictory principles of life and learning." Consequently, beneath the detail of the age, Valery laments, "I see . . . nothing! Nothing ... and yet an infinitely potential nothing."

Abandoning the feminine persona and not surprisingly the accompanying motif of hysteria, Valery changes figures: now the mind, no longer disordered but keenly analytic, is "an intellectual Hamlet" observing the terrain of European history with a "terribly lucid mind":

> Standing, now, on an immense sort of terrace of Elsinore that stretches from Basel to Cologne, bordered by the sands of Nieuport, the marshes of the Somme, the limestone of Champagne, the granites of Alsace ...our Hamlet of Europe is watching millions of ghosts." (183)

This terrace lies over the circumference of World War I's theatre, but the ghosts are not the ghosts of men, but the ghosts of "the subjects of our controversies...all the titles of our fame, the weight of all the discoveries and varieties of knowledge." Caught between "the tedium of

rehearsing the past and the folly of always trying to innovate," this Hamlet picks up skulls of those celebrated by history for their ideas, the great thinkers whose contributions form a chain stretching into the present devastation. And although the war is over, peace harbors more terrors than war, for peace is the condition in "which the natural hostility between men is manifested in creation... a time of creative rivalry and the battle of production," which in turn will precede another "dark passage" into war. The question remains, "Have I not exhausted my desire for radical experiment, indulged too much in cunning compounds?" (183)

Apropos of compounds, and at the risk of appearing obvious, one will of course note the resemblance between Valery's ship driven by a storm down into history and Gerontion's imaginary thought boat "driven by the Trades/ To a sleepy corner." Moreover, the seemingly aberrant couplings of virtues breeding vices and horrors breeding virtues recalls Gerontion's

Unnatural vices
Are fathered by our heroism. Virtues
Are forced upon us by our impudent crimes.

And Valery's question, "Are Knowledge and Duty then suspect?", shares with Gerontion's "After such Knowledge,

what forgiveness?" the sad tone of the irrevocable, the reaching of some border which, when passed, shuts one off from the repose of certainty. And so follows the demand for certainty, in "Gerontion" the insistent demand for signs, portents, and wonders ("Signs are taken for wonders") and in Valery's Europe, the groundswell of disordered incantations and bizarre prophecies.

It is, however, the presentation of the mind of Europe as observer, overwhelmed by the shock of war, overlooking his rutted "body" of history that reminds one most of Gerontion, another observer removed from history yet witness to it who, like Valery's Hamlet, seems doomed to a historical remembrance provoked by guilt. Valery's portrait of European culture as a disordered mind split into cognitive and physiological functions resembles Eliot's depiction in his essays of modern European or English history as a "splitting up of personality." Both Valery and Eliot tended to impose psychological patterns on cultural and historical phenomena, and it was Eliot who personified Europe or England as a collective consciousness that, although once a "unified sensibility" exhibiting a healthy fusion of the experiential and the cognitive, had in the modern age "split," thought and word becoming dissociated from feeling (a term that Eliot always associated with the physiological): "In the seventeenth

century a dissociation of sensibility set in, from which we have never recovered" ("Metaphysical" 64). Prior to the eighteenth century, "the intellect was immediately at the tips of the senses;" consequently, the poetry of the time presented a "direct sensuous apprehension of thought, or recreation of thought into feeling," unlike the poetry of Tennyson and Browning who "do not feel their thought as immediately as the odour of a rose" ("Metaphysical" 64).

Valery's "mind of Europe" is split along the conventional gender lines of male rationality and female emotionalism. Before the passage on Hamlet as the intellect of Europe, Europe is figured as a female in the throes of hysteria:

> An extraordinary shudder ran through the marrow of Europe. She felt in every nucleus of her mind that she was no longer the same, that she was no longer herself, that she was about to lose consciousness, a consciousness acquired through centuries of bearable calamities.

Later, the analytic intellect speaks as Hamlet, a conventional figure for the vitality of intellect at the expense of action, and begins his "lucid" analysis of the past. In "Gerontion," Eliot will present a sensibility dissociated along the lines of mind and body, the female relegated to act in another conventional role, to figure the enigmatic power of History, a bewitching if deadly Clio. Gerontion, "a dull head," separated from the physical

springs of sensibility, observes, like Hamlet, commanding his mind to cogitate ("Think...think"), to seize the past within some design that will speak a human truth; yet it is a tired mind, fighting its own hebetude, overwhelmed, like the female Europe, by imminent senselessness (in both senses of the word), fighting the insensate darkness (he is blind) by means of a jumbled memory.

Like Valery, who perceived the war as the ultimate physical expression of a disordered cultural mind, Eliot consistently pointed to war as the political manifestation of this "dissociation of sensibility." In his discussions of English poetry, it is the English Civil War that functions as the historical marker for the "splitting up of personality." And the American Civil War, a war he called "the greatest disaster in the whole of American history," constituted the political expression of the cultural schizophrenia Eliot saw working in the American sensibility. The Treaty of Versailles, which ended World War I, a treaty Eliot, like many around him, condemned as dangerously flawed, marked the culmination of "the process of disintegration" (Notes 45). And, in 1929, when asked how the collapse of Western culture would manifest itself, Eliot's blunt response was "Internecine warfare. . . People killing one another in the streets" (qtd. in Spender 120).

There is a final resemblance between these two observers. Valery's Hamlet questions the "cunning compounds" of scientific knowledge and political thought that have led to the "fatal precision" of culture necessary for the occurrence of the First World War. Gerontion searches out the "cunning passages" of the historian's text, "passages" that, along with "corridors" and "issues," suggest the image of a labyrinth, and, given the textual pun on passages, it is a textual labyrinth held in a mind--a mind which we have already seen as the House of Europe and which has its own edificial connotations. The phrase "cunning passages" figurally merges text and brain, sexual power and knowledge, a merging to which we can also add war, for as there are passages in texts and passages in houses and craniums, there are also "passages at arms." These passages are transfigured into "a wilderness of mirrors," which has evoked in some readers the construction or "contrivance" of the Treaty of Versailles in the Hall of Mirrors. We can also note Henri Bergson's definition of memory as "the moving mirror which continually reflects perception as a memory" (165) and Shelley's definition of poets' minds as "the mirrors of futurity." But here the mirrors seem shattered, their shards reflecting a wilderness that seems to contain both the political and the poetic. But we need not hurry to the heart of the poem to

attend to the figural merging of war and word, for this merging occurs, albeit more indirectly, at the very opening of the poem, where war, the physical expression of the cultural suicide that has resulted in the despairing milieu of the poem, paradoxically becomes a trope for that from which Gerontion is dissociated, from experience and volition, and meaningful historical participation.

Gerontion opens his deliberations with memories of past wars, memories that identify the recent war as the motivating force behind his ruminations and that begin his search of the past:

> Here I am an old man in a dry month
> Being read to by a boy, waiting for rain.
> I was neither at the hot gates
> Nor fought in the warm rain
> Nor knee deep in the salt marsh, heaving a cutlass,
> Bitten by flies, fought.

Although we may not be sure of where exactly Gerontion is, we can be, however, relatively certain of where he has not been: not at Thermopylae (of which the "hot gates" is a transliteration); not in "warm rain" and "knee-deep in the salt marsh," which suggests the swampiness of the Somme and Ypres Salient and which recall Pound's image of trench warfare ("walked eye-deep in hell"); and not clearing vague jungles, "heaving a cutlass" and "bitten by flies," like some seventeenth-century explorer or adventurer.

Most critics have read these lines as evidence of Gerontion's cowardice, of his distance from "real" experience. The lines are structured around negatives that maintain the speaker's absence and nonparticipation, a distance that certainly effects a tone of regret and complaint; hence, the "Here" is derisive and contrasts with the wistful "there" implied by the neither/nor construction. The references to past wars evoke heroism, vitality and prowess, qualities that contrast with the abstractedness and powerlessness of the speaker. For Gregory Jay, the allusions to battles, especially the heroism of the Greek defeat at Thermopylae, serve as evidence of Gerontion's distance from "historically meaningful action" (24). Elizabeth Drew reads "the warm rain" as a positive image connected to Thermopylae, "an active struggle of civilization against barbarians, refreshed, in spite of hardships, by the 'warm rain' of faith in a common cause" (50). For Grover Smith, the "warm rain" represents a "vital energy," like that of the "tropic luxuriance of jungles in which" Gerontion has not fought (64). And Robert Crawford points to the fear of inanity, of the horror of a "Death in Life" and the accompanying desire for "experience to fill the emptiness" that the lines illustrate (51).

Besides establishing Gerontion's separation from "action" and "experience," the lines, for many of the poem's readers, serve as evidence of Gerontion's use of rhetoric to compensate for his deprivation. The emphatic negatives and their insistence on absence are countermanded by a syntax and diction that in their vigor supply an imaginative participation that real history has denied him. For example, in the lines

> Nor knee-deep in the salt marsh, heaving a cutlass
> Bitten by flies, fought

the verb <u>fought</u> is radically separated from the "Nor" that defines it, a separation comprised of one adverbial and two participial phrases, which, replete with their caesuras, not to mention the final verb itself, emphasize and linger over actions never performed by the speaker in a place he never was. The two <u>b</u>'s and two <u>f</u>'s of the last line punctuate the sleight-of-hand.

There is general agreement, then, that a rhetorical performance is used to compensate for the speaker's declared separation from a "vital" world of experience that participation in history would have given him. The references to past wars are there because they connote the benefits of active engagement in history: "heroic action," "vital energy," and "historically meaningful action"--all of which Gerontion has been denied. There is, however, a

problem with this line of thought: To associate history with the benefits of meaningful participation and to associate Gerontion's rhetoric with the consolations of style is circular because the vitality accruing to history in this context has only so accrued because of Gerontion's grand rhetoric itself, which invests past wars with an exoticism and heroic appeal not so much present in the experience of war as in traditional representations of war. The "vital energy" of warm rain in a poem may inspire faith but in a fly-infested marsh or jungle inspires malarial fever, in the trenches of the Somme, foot-rot, and at Passchendaele, (for thousands) the opportunity to drown in mud. And the reality of being cut down at Thermopylae may have lacked the thrill of dying bravely at the rhetorically heated "hot gates." The lines are not so much references to past wars but rather references to the literary record cultural memory keeps.

History in the opening lines is not the arena of "meaningful action" from which Gerontion is absent; rather, it is, in its etymological sense of "story," the textual record of exemplary deeds transmitted through the romance of the chronicler, who more often than not invests the remote past with a glory that indicts the sordidness of the present. Gerontion, here, is not so much the chronicler as he is a listener and surveyor of the texts of history. We

do not know what the boy reads to Gerontion, but read he does, maybe of "The old music of bygone singers, rich haunting sentences of old leisurely authors" that "rang" in the brain of Edward Fitzgerald, whose biography by A. C. Benson stands as a source for the opening two lines[1]. Just as that old music came "unbidden" to Fitzgerald's pen, the old music of war comes unbidden to Gerontion, who begins to weave his text from the past made out of words. That is how the past survives in Gerontion's mind: not in deeds but in words.

This may explain the peculiar effect of the images of war of the opening lines--the opposing forces of absence and presence, of being not there yet there. The lines, as Robert Crawford has shown, echo those of another speaker, also removed from the heroics of war, the speaker in James Thompson's poem, "Memoir," who complains

> I fret 'neath gnat-stings, an ignoble prey
> While others with a sword-hilt in their grasp
> Have warm rich blood to feed their latest gasp
> (qtd. in Crawford 50).

But the striking element of Eliot's lines is the positioning of the speaker relative to these wars. While in

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[1] Benson, describing the elderly FitzGerald, wrote: "Here he sits, in a dry month, old and blind, being read to by a country boy, longing for rain. FitzGerald's mind was like the magic isle--'Full of noises,/ Sounds and sweet airs that give delight and hurt not.' The old music of bygone singers, rich haunting sentences of old leisurely authors, rang in his brain, and came unbidden to his pen" (141-142).

Thompson's lines the separation of the speaker from military adventure is clear, in Eliot's lines the speaker is ambiguously both there and here.

On the one hand, the "I was neither" clause denotes distance, but it also establishes a pre-existence, that Gerontion's consciousness is as old as the events where he was not. Indeed, like the Tiresias of The Waste Land, who, if not for Pound's surgical skill, would have been another incarnation of Gerontion, Gerontion has, as Harvey Gross puts it, "total recall; he was witness to the birth of Christ and he is spectator at the downfall of the West. His personality merges with historical figures and with characters from the history of literature. He speaks with the words of Edward Fitzgerald, the blind translator of the Rubaiyat, or in the iambic rhetoric of the Jacobean tragedians" (34). Yet we are told that he was not there, never experienced the quixotic gestes that his memory evokes.

To be not there yet there. Is this not the bitter effect of memory, both psychological and cultural, which Plutarch described as "the hearing of deaf actions, and the seeing of blind?" The mind can hold the past within its consciousness, vicariously enjoy its plot yet be helpless before the enchantment of its discourse and its irrevocability. Gerontion, like Othello, sees himself in a

dramatic light, doubling as both spectator and actor, because, as in a dream, he holds a past within his consciousness that weaves a sentence he cannot control, cannot suspend. The substitution of the epigraph from Shakespeare's Measure for Measure for the original Dante epigraph tells us much about where Eliot wanted to put emphasis.

Ronald Bush tells us of a canceled epigraph of an early typescript: "Come 'l mio corpo stea/nel mondo su, nulla scienza porto" ("How my body stands in the world above, I have no knowledge"). The line is from Dante's Inferno XXXIII, where Fra Alberigo explains that because he betrayed his guests, his soul was delivered to hell, leaving his living body to move about on earth. A perfect epigraph for the desiccated figure of Gerontion, "a dull head." But the epigraph from Measure for Measure changes the emphasis from complete division of mind and body to an emphasis on the dreamer, who does not experience division but dédoublement (to use a word of which Eliot was fond), one self becoming two, the dreamer dreaming and the dreamer dreamt: "Thou hast nor youth nor age/ But as it were an after dinner sleep dreaming of both." The lines are spoken by the Duke in Measure for Measure, who, disguised as a humble friar, counsels a young man facing execution to disinvest himself of the world, to look at life

disinterestedly, such as in a dream in which youth and age, the past and the future, the beginning and the end, are held by the disinterested equipoise of one with eyes on heaven and immortality rather than on this mutable world. The austerity of the Duke's godly but cold oratory is comically meliorated by the audience's knowledge that at any moment, like Christ, who comes back like a "thief in the night," the Duke can shed his disguise, resume his abandoned office as magistrate, and dispense a merciful justice.

In "Gerontion," the execution has already taken place in the form of World War I, and the intercession of justice means the wrath of Christ, whose imminent return hangs in the poem as an eschaton: "The tiger springs in the new year/*Us* he devours." Indeed, apocalyptic imagery haunts the poem. The winds that blow through the poem lead to the disintegration of the cosmopolis, where, as Gross describes, "Through an Einsteinian metamorphosis these people are changed from mass to energy, their scattered substance blown by the cold winds of space" (41). Nature and history hurtle further and further into chaos and, ultimately, into "fractured atoms," just as the second law of thermodynamics and Pearson's kinetic theory of gas indicated--two theories which led to Henry Adams' own apocalyptic vision.

Gerontion's "dream" is not then the drowsy contentment of the after-dinner sleep but a fitful delirium of thought in which "youth and age," the past and present coalesce into an eschatological nightmare that closes into the mind. In a way, the violent end of history that Gerontion fears has already occurred since there is no longer any room for action or deed; the narrative stream of history remains suspended within the mind as memory repeats the forms by which humankind has attempted to order and thus understand history--history as Herodotian record of epic deeds, as nature's cyclical pattern of birth and death, and history as teleological process, moving toward some purposeful, or blind, end. All are part of the wind that weaves the vacant shuttles. In this poem, the winds of history that drive Gerontion's boat are also the winds of a discourse disengaged from its proper object, almost as if once history has ended it can only remain in the words of the past, now vestiges that the words of the present can only trace, the dead Word's faint emanations: "The word within a word, unable to speak a word,/Swaddled with darkness." Lancelot Andrewes' description of Verbum Infans--"The Word without a word; the aeternall Word not hable to speake a word" (85)--is transformed into the absent center at the heart of language. Verbal dissociations parallel cultural and psychic ones.

Although the images of war in the opening lines suggest a concrete action or a "reality" of historical deed denied the inactive speaker, they are no more than a function of Gerontion's rhetoric, a rhetoric not present because of compensation, that is, because of an individual's withdrawal from a reality or from history, but because reality itself has withdrawn from language. Like a dreamer dreaming, Gerontion is transfixed between a passive spectatorship and the dreamt stage of history upon which he never moved, because it was never really there, or if there, there only in the form of figures and masks of language, that, given present conditions, mock the present.

Gerontion has no ghosts, ghosts which for Eliot and Valery, as well as for Ezra Pound, represented the living presence of tradition and history. In Valery's essay, Hamlet is haunted by "millions of ghosts." In Three Cantos, Pound writes, "Ghosts move about me/ Patched with histories." But for Gerontion, there are no ghosts, only the bodies of texts that form the body of History, the alluring body of a guileful woman:

> History has many cunning passages, contrived corridors
> And issues, deceives with whispering ambitions,
> Guides us by vanities. Think now
> She gives when our attention is distracted
> And what she gives, gives with such supple confusions
> That the giving famishes the craving. Gives too late
> What's not believed in, or if still believed,
> In memory only, reconsidered passion.

The drive to understand history, the desire to find the center of History's labyrinth is described in sexual terms and the failure in terms of the impotence and unfulfilled cravings of epistemophilic endeavors, a carnality which extends into the corrupt atmosphere of Jacobean intrigue suggested by the imagery. History plays the conventional courtesan suitable to the conspiracies of palace galleries, to the whispers of the ambitious and the self-serving who populate the violent corridors of Jacobean revenge tragedy.

Corridors of history can also be actual corridors--such as the Polish corridor "contrived" by the Treaty of Versailles--and, as such, blend the conspiracy of palace politics with the geographical carvings World War I effected. And there is another corridor that comes to mind, the corridor that Valery alludes to in reporting the peripheral points of Hamlet's terrace: the war corridor of the trenches, which stretched from Belgium to Switzerland. Although we think of the trenches as making up one continuous, seamless line, they were, like History's labyrinth, actually maze-like, made up of 25,000 miles of complex corridors, linked by communication traverses, that zig-zagged, forcing the soldiers to turn and twist their way through the lines (Fussell 42). Circuitously moving at night and stumbling over unknown objects in the dead-littered neutral ground between enemy trenches was much

like weaving one's way through a dark maze. As T. E. Hulme said in his diary, the neutral ground was "practically never seen by anyone in the daylight . . . It's full of dead things, dead animals here & there, dead unburied animals, skeletons of horses destroyed by shell fire. It's curious to think of it later on in the war, when it will again be seen in the daylight" (167). Movement through the dark was "always in the same direction" and over "definite paths." Hulme reported one of these paths "led right over the chest of a dead peasant (Belgian)" (169). In 1915, after a conversation with Hulme, Ezra Pound recreated Hulme's wartime experience, writing in a poem,

> To and fro, from the lines,
> Men walk as on Picadilly,
> Making paths in the dark

lines which concluded with

> My mind is a corridor. The minds about me are corridors.
> Nothing suggests itself. There is nothing to do but keep on.
> (qtd. in Longenbach Cottage 125)

If not but for the resoluteness of the last sentence, these lines could have been spoken by Gerontion, whose labyrinth of history fuses, as we have seen, cerebral arenas with political and military ones.

Yet, although the vertiginous allusiveness of the language in "Gerontion" holds the contemporaneity of the

War in its textures, the words resist referential engagement with it; indeed, any referential engagement that they have seems anchored, at the expense of the modern context, in the world of Jacobean revenge drama. Stephen Spender recognizes the suitable correspondence between the "decadence, violence, intrigues, villainy and deviousness of the Jacobean world of corridors and mirrors" to the Europe of the Treaty of Versailles; but Spender has challenged this parallel as being one inadequately constructed and insufficiently illuminating. First, he argues that Eliot allows himself to be carried away by the Jacobean analogy so thoroughly that "the parallel of the post-Elizabethan disillusionment, with its haunted decayed poetry, takes over the poem" (63). Second, he argues that, even if the Jacobean method had been suitably restrained, there is another problem:

> If the second half of "Gerontion" doesn't really convince on the levels of imagination or of intellectual argument, this is because the attempt to draw a parallel between Jacobean plays about political intrigues at small Italian courts and the situation of Europe at the time of the signing of the Treaty of Versailles doesn't work. The modern political theme, which affects the whole world, is being forced through too narrow a channel. The sinister backstairs post-Elizabethan atmosphere is hypnotic rather than illuminating. Critics have suggested that "contrived corridors" and, some lines later, "a wilderness of mirrors" are images suggested by the intrigues of the peacemakers in 1918 in the Versailles Hall of Mirrors to establish a "Polish corridor." If this is so, it seems less silly to say that the Polish corridor and the Versailles mirrors put a Jacobean poetic thought

> in Eliot's head than that the pastiche Jacobean poetry significantly evokes the Europe of Clemenceau and Lloyd George (64-65).

To argue that the Jacobean world is an unsuitable analogy for the modern context is to assume, even demand, an intentional neatness of boundaries between tenor and vehicle that does not apply here or to much of Eliot's poetry. Furthermore, Eliot does not need to restrain "the haunted, decayed" poetic effects because the logic of the passage lies not in the drawing of a parallel between past and modern contexts but in allowing the "hypnotic" to overwhelm the "illuminating" to such an extent that the constructive impulse of the poetry is foregrounded at the expense of the subject, however morally compelling. The engagement with the Jacobean world is more a matter of engaging with the voluptuous eloquence of Elizabethan and Jacobean blank verse, with its exploitation of the figural and tonal resources of words, and its construction of a "theatre of words" rather than it is an engaging with the visual properties of its subject. Analogical lines here do not link "worlds"--Tourneur's stage evoking the Europe of 1919--as much as they link the "method" or poetic strategies of Elizabethan and Jacobean verse drama with the nature of Gerontion's voice and mind--a voice that, as we have seen, enacts and is enacted by what Giles Gunn would

call "scriptable and iconographical forms," and a mind that as Mind of Europe is mesmerized by the aesthetic force of such forms.

Eliot's censure of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century verse drama masked, though not very well, great admiration and recognition of its influence on his poetry. Its enchantment with the incantatory potential of language and its gluttony for the sensational were problematic tendencies that Eliot found in his own verse. Hugh Kenner first argued that "Gerontion" was an exercise in purgation for Eliot, exploiting as it does the poetic tradition that began with the Elizabethans and culminated in the poetry of Swinburne (which Eliot attacked as a poetry of "hallucination"), a tradition that Kenner defines as presenting a "world in which poetic effects are inclined to glide succulently down among words, looking like sleep, proffering the reader a strong toil of grace; in which the poet more or less consciously capitalizes on the abundance in English, of words which, like 'toil' and 'grace,' incorporate barely differentiated the force of verb, noun, and adjective simultaneously, and so discourage a sentence from going unambiguously about its business" (Invisible 135). The power of Elizabethan and Jacobean verse drama lies, for Kenner, in its ability to "transfigure the visible," to turn the drabness of its stage and the paucity

of its theatrical effects into an aural feast for the mind. In keeping with Eliot's critique of the ability of such a use of words to remove one from experience, in their tonal and figural potential to create artificial worlds and artificial feelings, Kenner thus presents "Gerontion" as a "theatre of words", a "wilderness of glass" cut like the "aphrodisiac glasses" of Sir Epicure Mammon, which are

> Cut in more subtle angles to disperse
> And multiply my image as I walk
> Naked between my succubae;

The connections between the Hall of Mirrors and aphrodisiac glasses (and, for that matter, Bergson's moving mirrors of memory and Shelley's "mirrors of futurity") are not as tenuous as may first appear.

The moral complication of Jacobean rhetoric, for Eliot, involved more than words creating artificial worlds and artificial feelings, removing their listeners from the "real world of experience." Its pathology also lay in the ability of words to enclose the violent, the corrupt, or the barbaric within their forms, making their contents an "affair of pungent sauces" palatable to the aesthetic taste. Eliot's attack on the Elizabethans for their morbidity, their disillusionment, and their lack of a moral "system" always involved the accompanying attack on their "sensationalism" and their "artistic greediness, their

desire for every sort of effect together" ("Dramatists" 116-17).

This troubling entanglement of eloquence and corruption parallels the entanglement of war and word in "Gerontion," where the "cunning passages" of the Mind of Europe are disordered narratives of desire and power which formally enclose the violence of historical content. Renouncing the force of history as a force linked to political and moral conflict (much like Valery's Hamlet), Gerontion embraces defeat and physical dissolution, seeking in the closure of history, through the stance of spectatorship, a marginalization and thus an exclusion from its barbarities. Valery's Hamlet is isolated from culpability by his reputed faint-heartedness, Gerontion by his nonparticipation in battle. Because Gerontion is but a cipher of history, his attempt to separate himself from history, his attempt to be an observer of it, can only be done by doubling, as we have seen, into nonparticipant and combatant, spectator and actor, dreamer and dream, cogitating mind and the concupiscent body of history; yet this detachment is compromised by a rhetoric whose brilliance lies in a ventriloquism that throws the violations of history into its textures, exciting "the membrane," holding the mind captive to the drama of its own drama, its own theatre of war.

CHAPTER THREE

THE WASTE LAND: WAR AND THE DISCOURSE OF QUOTATION

> "We can only say that it appears likely that poets in our civilization, as it exists at present, must be difficult. Our civilization comprehends great variety and complexity, and this variety and complexity, playing upon a refined sensibility, must produce various and complex results. The poet must become more and more comprehensive, more allusive, more indirect, in order to force, to dislocate if necessary, language into his meaning." (246 SE)

Throughout his essays, Eliot consistently argued for the existence of an indelible connection between literary practice and its social context, although the exact nature of such a relation is unclear. The above statement, for example, would seem to set matters straight by its relating formal to social complexity, yet the statement moves simultaneously in two directions: (1) Comprehensiveness, allusiveness, and indirection force a dislocation of language so as to accurately reflect and thus participate in a culture that can only understand its own complex idiom; or (2) because of the determinations of this pre-existing idiom on both personality and medium, the poet must move through it, dislocating, forcing, effecting a formal violence to capture meaning, "his meaning," not necessarily one articulated by his culture and thereby

possibly reactive and resistant. Therefore, formal method both reflects and transcends external complexities.

Of course, it is The Waste Land, along perhaps with the Cantos and Mauberley, which came to be seen and, despite (or perhaps because of) its domestication and with its teeth pulled, continues to be seen as the model example of an experiment in the adequation of form to modernity, an experiment which continues to elicit controversy over the relation between its formal and its socio-political discontinuities. The form of Eliot's attempt "to force" and "to dislocate" the language to reflect and yet resist the historical violence of the war and the resulting cultural disintegration is anamorphic because its discontinuities actualize cultural disorders and at the same time serve as a strategy to transcend those disorders through the search for a new kind of patterning.

And readers have indeed taken up the search. As James Knapp observes, most readings of the poem have directly argued or assumed that "the necessary dislocations of poetic language not only mirror the present state of civilization but reflect the poet's urgent need to intervene, through a choice of significant form, in the apparent disorders of history" (39). And, again, most readings point to irony as the method by which the very symptoms of the cultural disease are used to transcend the

disease--a kind of homeopathic poetics. Thus, in these readings the statement "These fragments I have shored against my ruins" indicates the poet's attempt to redeem the apparent ruins of a culture's tradition by recomposing its broken forms into organic unities that will resist outside chaos. So, in this view, his "heap of broken images," reminiscent of Gerontion's "wilderness of glass," becomes in the poem's last section rubble from which the poet sorts fragments, as Jonathan Bishop describes, "like some king after a defeat, to assemble fragments of that tradition which amounts for him to an equivalent of a scattered demesne" (172).

Early commentators, following the poet's lead, have sorted rubble for the soundings of unities that recompose the broken forms--narrative unities (e.g., Grail legends, fertility myths, double-sexed, blind prophets) all faithfully supplied in accordance with the Notes' directions, or organic ones, like Joseph Frank's argument for a spatial logic that subsumes any temporal structure. War, in these readings, is consistently read as a historical counterpart to, if not cause of, the conditions of the waste land--whether those conditions be linguistic indeterminacy, cultural chaos, or psychological fragmentation--and so stands outside of the normal cultural production of signs as a wolf at the door. This assumes

that war is a phenomenon that works outside of culture, generating a violence that both creates the possibility of culture yet allows for its destruction. As Tadusz Slawek has pointed out, this distancing of war from culture leads in humanist discourse to the "paradox of fragile cultural values surrounded by a thick stratum of phenomena threatening but, at the same time, formative to those values." So he argues that war, in this view, stands in "dangerously dialectical opposition" to culture, for it precedes culture, standing outside of it as a formlessness that periodically bursts through, leveling and privileging (309). To write poetry in the waste land is to rebuild, again, the destroyed cultural house, absorbing discontinuities, which, as Knapp states, may be terrifying in society but "become, when reenacted as art, the means to perceive a new order impervious to anything outside itself" (40).

But perceiving this new order has been problematic, for the heterogeneous text invites multiple meanings and readings, a multiplicity accelerated by the publication of The Waste Land's manuscripts. Complicating the established boundaries of interpretation, the manuscripts served as evidence that The Waste Land was the product not only of a "shoring" but also a "storing" up of miscellaneous work going back as far as 1914, years before Eliot knew of

Jessie Weston's work or before he had read Frazer. The discovery of these manuscripts led to a new awareness of the complexity of Eliot's addition of the Notes. Before the publication of the manuscripts, Eliot's pronouncements on the centrality of Tiresias' consciousness and on the structural importance of the romance narrative to the poem had supplied early readers with a framework to arrange the dissonant relations of its fragments. However, the early draft, titled "He Do the Police in Different Voices," took attention away from such mythic narratives, since it showed that if there were any primary plan, Eliot was thinking more in terms of writing an urban satire in the tradition of Pope, Dryden and Dickens. Moreover, the exact extent, if not the intent, of Ezra Pound's editing was made apparent and complicated affairs since the fabric of the text now included the presence of more than one hand (and if we count Vivien Eliot's, then the presence of more than two).

With the publication of Eliot's dissertation and the recent accessibility of his student papers and notebooks, a new appreciation of how far Eliot anticipated many assumptions and concerns of current literary theory has led readers of The Waste Land away from seeking "to recuperate" the poem's ostensible incoherence toward studying the way the poem enacts its own provisionality, manifesting and yet

displacing meanings that seem drawn from that mysterious plane Eliot described both in the earlier and later stages of his career: the "indefinite extent," a space of adventure and failure, "the frontiers of consciousness beyond which words fail, yet meanings still exist" (OPP 22-23).

The most recent work on Eliot has emphasized the importance of this issue of the credibility or contingency of language in The Waste Land. Harriet Davidson reads the poem as a phenomenological investigation of absence, Jonathan Bishop as a formal articulation of the question of linguistic credibility, William Harmon and Denis Donoghue, the conflict between the inarticulate noise and the logocentric Word, and most recently, John Paul Riquelme who argues that "In The Waste Land, Eliot evokes writing's potential for undermining voice and self by using styles of speaking and even apparently lyrical language in ways that involve disfiguration and the loss of speech and that reveal the poem's written, constructed, rather than spoken, spontaneous character" (181). The way that the poem foregrounds this "constructiveness," its "written-ness," calls attention to hermeneutic processes involving the reader in the textual process itself--duplicating our search to decipher what always remains in part an indecipherable world.

The poem has been called an "unstable" or "incomplete" allegory about writing poetry in the wasteland of modernity--most fittingly because The Waste Land can be read as modern allegory or, to use Angus Fletcher's phrase, a "decapitated allegory," meaning that, although retaining the figurative gestures of allegory, the poem is dispossessed of a vital, culturally approved system of reference, a transcendent origin or paradigm which it longs for, and its fragmentary form can be read as a succession of attempts to generate and to reach the stability of such a paradigm. In The Waste Land, we can find this succession of attempts not in the juxtaposition of static, discrete fragments that refuse to cohere, but in the stratagem of citation, which Jonathan Bishop persuasively argues is the essential form of the poem--a poem whose intertextual enigmas, produced through the citation of multiple discourses both linguistic and extra-linguistic, draw its readers into its own interrogation of language.

The urgency of the poem's interrogation of language arises out of a historical situation which has disclosed the nature of war to be not a formless opposite of culture, precedent to its formation, but a product of and thus a form of culture, which in turn generates new cultural signs, or as Slawek puts it, "turns signs of the constructive into signs of the destructive," depriving

other cultural signs of their "innocence," revealing that formal violence is not completely separate from other forms of culturally engendered violence (309). Throughout The Waste Land, the grounds for the expected opposition between war and poetry erode by means of the subterfuge of citation, which in its shattering of the continuum of tradition and its discourses and in the resulting proliferation of voices, tongues, and provisional contexts exposes a vision whose horrors defy the power of language. The contextual interpenetration of war and literary construction, which citation provides, exposes at least one of these horrors: the intimate relations, antagonistic yet collusive, between cultural iniquities and art.

Eliot's use of citation, as has often been noted, took a revolutionary form, radicalizing what had traditionally been a conservative mode. According to George Steiner, allusion, or quotation, and its close cousins of parody and pastiche, invoked, during much of the course of Western poetry, "the fully declared but unsaid codes and presences" of a culture of "civility," a canon formed and generated by the interplay of Christian and classical lines, which "very largely generated and organized the shapes of western public speech and personal identity among the educated" (Difficulty 7-8). Citation, drawing on this canon of shared value and reference, served to authorize, as well as

to elucidate (seemingly), the poem making use of it. Erik Svarny states that, innocent of Eliot's procedures of "abortive classicism," the neo-classical poet, for example, would have used quotation to clarify his meaning, mediating between audience and poem in an attempt "to restrict his sources to a consistent range of material which in theory at least, would be shared and respected by the poet and his educated public (the individual poet counterpointing his gifts against a traditional frame of reference)" (162).

Eliot's use of citation, however, serves to ironize, on multiple levels, tradition's relation to his poem, for while his elaborate citations draw an oftentimes distracting attention to literary history, which would seem to elevate its authority and importance, they only serve to testify to its failure. Tradition itself appears exploded into shards and traces of past, now alien, value, like the cities "Burst[ing] in the violet air" of "What the Thunder Said." Indeed, the most obvious link between the experience of war and the poem lies in the poem's vision of tradition as an inherited order that has been left in ruins, a vision which accounts for the strong sense of elegy in the poem. Steiner, pointing to the importance of elegy to modernism, writes, "The archival energies of Joyce, of Eliot, of Pound, the many-layered structures of allusion which characterize their work, are a ceremony of mourning for

resources once naturally accessible to writer and reader in the contract of culture" (9).

In response to this sense of elegy in the poem, we may read the poem, if we like, as the poet's attempt to reconstruct tradition, to re-invent literary history, by reconciling what has become dispersed and thus disparate material into an order achieved through a private aesthetic standard. Although citation may even more easily uphold tradition than subvert it, matters in The Waste Land are more complicated because, as Jonathan Bishop has demonstrated, Eliot's "discourse by quotation" refers not only to past literary works but extends to the "re-collecting" of past experience, real or imaginary, private or dramatic, as in the fragmented narratives of "The Game of Chess" and "The Fire Sermon" and even to the citation of extra-linguistic discourses. The cockney chat of the pub and the soldier's song concerning Mrs. Porter function, according to Bishop, as citations of the "unconscious rhythms of popular speech," "a communal analogue to the recollection of traditional verses" (157). The recalling of the conversation in the Hofgarten and of the Hyacinth girl is a "psychic quotation" from some private, individual past, which when verbally "recollected" seems to elude full presentation, remaining fragmentary and enigmatic in its distance. They are, according to Bishop, "the private

analogue to fragments from other poems" (157). And then there are the incomplete narratives, the unfinished tales of the unhappy upper-class husband and wife, the conversation at the Pub, and Tiresias' vision of the typist and the "carbuncular" clerk. Because of their fragmentary structure and the disembodied qualities of the speakers, they seem to be cited from other sources, and Bishop reminds us of that peculiar quality of Eliot's dramatism, that "he is inclined rather to listen to, almost to 'quote,' the words of others than to put them clearly on stage" (162). At the same time, but in contrast to the talk of the poem, the recollected language of poems, performance, and elegy, stands what William Harmon has called the "idiom of the inarticulate"--music, noises, babble, and "creaturely sounds." The "water-dripping song" of the hermit thrush is cited as a literal "Drip, drop," the "inviolable voice" of the nightingale as a "Jug Jug," a "Twit Twit Tereu," the cock's annunciation, rich in religious symbolism, incarnated into "co co rico," and Wagnerian lyric translated as "Weialala leia."

This juxtaposition and interplay of multiple discourses reveal just how far quotation has lost its usual ancillary role. Here, it overwhelms the expected expository or narrative continuum of the text, overwhelming even the coherence of the poet's voice. The opposition,

set up by Eliot's note on Tiresias and by the poem's original title, between a unifying voice and a diversity of voices does not ease the difficulty of tracing the relationship between quoted voices and the "unifying consciousness" of the poet. When so much seems quoted, the multiplication of voice turns the poet himself into a cubist-like face of intersecting quotations. But more than ventriloquist, a popular figure given the original title, the poet plays collector, assembling from ruined memorials of private and cultural codes a collection as capricious as any private collection.

As regards the poem's method of quotation, there is, on the one hand, a struggle to build up a destroyed cultural inheritance, the quoted fragments being signs of its defeated history and the babble of multiple discourses being a sign of the impossibility of reaching the sustenance of antecedent contexts through the exhausted resources of language; on the other hand, however, quotation does violence to the force of tradition, juxtaposing miscellaneous textures from past and present discourse as a means of subverting the order of tradition. The figure of the collector is therefore relevant because his activity, as Walter Benjamin recognized, both preserves and destroys the past. Despite acute ideological differences between Eliot and Benjamin,

Benjamin's treatment of quotation and the collector figure is enormously helpful to understanding Eliot's poetic method in The Waste Land[2].

Benjamin's ideal text of history was a collection or, as he called it, a "constellation" of "thought-fragments," juxtaposed quotations from miscellaneous sources that, instead of serving to elucidate the author's running commentary, would replace it as well as the author, the quotations speaking for themselves through their "collision" with each other (qtd. in Jennings 36). Hannah Arendt defines the method as one which consisted of "tearing fragments out of their context and arranging them afresh in such a way that they illustrated one another and were able to prove their raison d'etre in a free-floating state" (47). Analogous to the discoveries of modernist form, Benjamin discovered the destructive power of the act of quotation, describing its power as arising not from "the strength to preserve but to cleanse, to tear out of context, to destroy" so as to "break the spell of tradition" and to attack the "mindless peace of complacency" of the present. Of his own use of the method, he stated, "Quotations in my works are like robbers by the

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[2]Svarny has noted the applicability of Benjamin's figure of the collector to Eliot's poetic method, but his comparison points in a different direction than does my analysis.

roadside who make an armed attack and relieve an idler of his convictions" (qtd. in Arendt 38).

A fusion of quotations torn from their original contexts and then juxtaposed serves to rupture the continuum of authoritative discourses, destroying the pernicious placidity of the present by disclosing dialectical truths undisturbed by the mediations of traditional historical narratives, which Benjamin condemned as suppressing true relations of past to present. The historian becomes, then, as the amateur collector who picks or "carves" out of the historical context the precious bit, the authentic nugget, exotic and interesting in its momentary isolation from living system and its foreignness to the present. Destroying its original context, the collector creates a new context when he sets it among his other artifacts. Although ostensibly preserving the past, the collector shatters the work of tradition. Whereas tradition orders the past chronologically and "systematically in that it separates the positive from the negative, the orthodox from the heretical and ...[the] obligatory and relevant from the mass of irrelevant or merely interesting opinions and data," the collector's view of the past, according to Arendt, is unsystematic because his criterion is genuineness or significance, "something that defies any systematic classification" (44).

This power of the collector to destroy the causal and systematic power of tradition upon the present and to present a rival ordering of the past, for Benjamin, was a fitting analogy for his work as historian, although the imposition of the principle of montage upon history did not mean to effect the arbitrariness of surrealism. Only through the "constellation of images" gathered from past and present, from both the detritus and the treasures of culture, could the past speak to the present and in turn could the present come to see its own face.

Benjamin's insistence on the destructive power of quotation was, according to Arendt, strengthened by the War, which confirmed that the past, perceived as a bearer of tradition, was no longer "transmissible" but "citable." For Benjamin, "the figure of the collector . . . could assume such eminently modern features . . . because history itself. . . had already relieved him of this task of destruction and he only needed to bend down, as it were, to select his precious fragments from the pile of debris" (45). And what history did not "ruin," the collector would; Benjamin writes that "he reduces what exists to ruins, not in order to create ruins, but in order to find the way that leads through them" (qtd. in Frisby 109). Here is the same paradox that we find in Eliot's own "constellation of images": history's "citability" is both a

trope for its disintegration and a stratagem of formal violence upon its forms.

In The Waste Land, ruination, whether effected by the violence of history or by the violence of the poet or collector's hand, offers the opportunity to form a fusion of the past and the present, of public and private contexts, intersecting planes of reference that release their meaning through the act of reading. Michael Levenson points out that it is important to remember that "the poem is not, as is common to say, built upon the juxtaposition of fragments: it is built out of their interpenetration" (190). Interpenetration, yes, but not integration: the contexts from which the fragments originate cannot be erased, thereby always creating tensions that themselves generate ever new meanings. If the original contexts are literary, they draw the interpreter down through parallel configurations; if they are private or unknown, they leave a void that gives the fragment a seemingly greater significance. The fragments, too, converge with their new contexts, forming new meanings as they work with and against each other. And yet, as Eliot himself makes clear in "Tradition and the Individual Talent," the new context cannot help but be altered by the alterior ones. The result, as Riquelme points out, is that the "multiple linkages" keep the reader in motion not only laterally, as

parts connect with and echo other parts, but also vertically, through stratifications of other texts and contexts, since "there are as many paths forward and back for the reader to follow, as well as paths to and fro between them, and paths in and out of them" (166).

Of one path, that leads directly from the Stetson passage at the end of "The Burial of the Dead" to the last lines of "What the Thunder Said," Riquelme has pointed out the strategic placement and significance.

> Unreal City,
> Under the brown fog of a winter dawn,
> A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many,
> I had not thought death had undone so many.
> Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled,
> And each man fixed his eyes before his feet.
> Flowed up the hill and down King William Street,
> To where Saint Mary Woolnoth kept the hours
> With a dead sound on the final stroke of nine.
> There I saw one I knew, and stopped him, crying
> "Stetson!
> "You who were with me in the ships at Mylae!
> "That corpse you planted last year in your garden,
> "Has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom this year?
> "Or has the sudden frost disturbed its bed?
> "Oh keep the Dog far hence, that's friend to men,
> "Or with his nails he'll dig it up again!
> "You! hypocrite lecteur! -- mon semblable, -- mon frere!"
>
> . . .
>
> I sat upon the shore
> Fishing, with the arid plain behind me
> Shall I at least set my lands in order?
>
> London Bridge is falling down falling down falling down

Poi s'ascose nel foco che gli affina
Quando fiam ceu chelidon--O swallow swallow
Le Prince d'Aquitaine a la tour abolie
These fragments I have shored against my ruins
Why then Ile fit you. Hieronymo's mad againe.
Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata.

Shantih shantih shantih

In these two passages, the radical discourse of quotation, as we have defined it, plays its part transparently. Both moments of the poem bring together the greatest diversity of style and context, each stanza beginning a narrative that disintegrates into a collage of quotations, and if there are in the poem, as many readers have traced, crises of psychological fragmentation, here they become acute. In the Stetson passage, obscure pronouns complicate boundaries between speakers and listeners, even between readers and speakers, to such a degree that voice, Riquelme continues, seems merely a matter of textual repetition, and in the last lines, the "I" disintegrates into strands of literary quotations, a final collapse of voice, which, for many readers, expresses the speaker's madness. Moreover, the last lines of the poem itself are linked to the Stetson passage by the repetition of "Unreal City" in "What the Thunder Said," a link further strengthened by other repetitions, enough to say that the latter passage cites the former: London resurfaces, as do

English Renaissance drama (through quotation) and the apostrophic "O", all held in a suspension of quotations from foreign literatures. More significant to the argument, however, is the centrality of the two passages to the issue of war and poetry, because being the points at which the catabolic and generative properties of "citability" are most acute, they plot the intersection of the opposing contexts of war and poetry.

The Stetson passage is the first in the poem where past and present intersect through textual repetition, where modernity is crossed by that which has been, forming what Benjamin called the "synchronic moment," i.e., "when that which has been and the Now come together in a flash as a constellation" (qtd. in Jennings 36). It is of course the speaker's sudden cry to Stetson and his reference to Mylae and thus to the Punic Wars that dislocate time and space, bringing together post-War London to fourth-century post-War Rome, but it is first through Baudelaire and Dante that London becomes as a palimpsest, "unreal," a description not only of its moral hollowness but also of its spectral transparency that allows for the perception of its layers.

As the Notes tell us, the opening lines from Baudelaire's "Les Septs Vieillards" lie beneath the opening words "Unreal City": "Fourmillante cité, cité pleine de

rêves/ Ou le spectre, en plein jour, raccroche le passant!" In Baudelaire's poem, the speaker wanders along city streets through a yellow fog and is confronted, one by one, by seven decrepit men, more apparitions than human who form a "cortège infernal." Two passages from Dante's Inferno are combined to form the lines "I had not thought death had undone so many./Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled,/ And each man fixed his eyes before his feet." In Canto III of Dante's Inferno, entering the Vestibule of Hell where the souls of the spiritually torpid are located, Dante sees a crowd gathered behind a banner: "e dietro le venía sí lunga tratta/ di gente, ch'i' non averei creduto/ che morte tanta n'avesse disfatta." [Behind that banner trailed so long a file of people, I should never have believed that death could have unmade so many souls]. And in Canto IV, where the souls of the unbaptized forever wait in Limbo, the first circle of Hell, sighs arise from the crowds, "Quivi, secondo che per ascoltare,/ non avea pianto mai che di sospiri/ che l'aura etterna facevan tremare." [Here, for as much as hearing could discover, there was no outcry louder than the sighs/ that caused the everlasting air to tremble]. In 1950, Eliot remarked that he had used Dante here "to establish a relationship between the medieval inferno and modern life" (qtd. in Svarny 208).

The references to Dante and Baudelaire, as well as the later reference to Mylae, transform London itself into what Kenner has called "a jumbled quotation" ("Urban" 37). Post-war London lies over Baudelaire's Paris, over Ancient Rome and over Dante's underworld city of suffering like a stacked Troy. But perhaps an analogy of layering is inappropriate, for the image of a buried past lying labyrinthine below the present, connotes a simultaneity and a unity of time, that although perfectly appropriate to the theme of the passage, distort the passage's structural complexity.

Although Jewel Spears Brooker and Joseph Bentley limit their view of the Unreal City to the intersection of Dante's Dis with 1922 London, they provide two useful analogies to explain how the passage presents past and present frames: photographic double exposure and the oscillation of cursive and recursive images (such as the well-known picture of a vase which at a different moment can be a picture of two faces in profile facing each other). The city is both real and unreal, for as "In a photograph, this scene would be a double exposure, two cities that have the overlapping and the faceted arrangements of cubism . . . As with the case of the concave convex alternation in optical illusions the two scenes cannot be perceived simultaneously and their

oscillation cannot be stopped" (83). Thus, just as when we look at cursive and recursive images, our attention oscillates from London of the '20s to the Vestibule of Hell, and although we may try to fix the double-image of London into a single image, we "will be unable to unify and stabilize the doubleness" because "regardless of how arduously that mind works to make them coexist in a single moment, they will always remain a sequence in time" (83, 85).

Yet, our inability to integrate perfectly a metaphor does not mean that, as Brooker and Bentley argue, "neither city image is established as central" (83). I would argue that the contemporary image is ultimately central, albeit not necessarily always focused. The very specificity of actual street and church names, of London Bridge, and of the sound of the nine o'clock bell, harbinger of the daily return of London's commuters, does not allow us to stray very far from the contemporary, however shot through with other "exposures." If, upon a holographic turn, we see Dante's spectral city for a moment (once the citation has been made clear), or think of Baudelaire's "swarming" crowds or even of Roman adventurers, it is always to the London street that we return. The convergence and divergence of other images or cities is what effects and defines the experience of modernity itself, that is, a

perception, in Eliot's words, "not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence."

Convergence is easy: both in Dante's infernal city and in Eliot's doomed London, a crowd--in one case physically dead, in another spiritually dead--passes a spectator, whether flaneur or pilgrim, who greets one of the crowd in a shock of sudden recognition. But this double exposure of twentieth-century locale and medieval spectacle is framed by direct and indirect quotation of Baudelaire, appropriately enough because of Baudelaire's position as one of the "moderns" who, like Poe before him in the important "The Man of the Crowd," recognized early the historical novelty and significance of the modern urban crowd.

As a collectivity of mass that moved and changed, the crowd offered Baudelaire a paradigm of modernity and, as such, an occasion for la modernité. For Baudelaire, the artist as flaneur experiences "an immense joy to set up house in the heart of the multitude, amid the ebb and flow of movement, in the midst of the fugitive and the infinite"; the crowd, "an immense reservoir of electrical energy" is "a magical society of dreams." The artist in the crowd becomes "a mirror as vast as the crowd itself" reflecting "the crowd's multiplicity of life and the flickering grace of all the elements of life" (9-10).

In Eliot's hands, however, the "dense and continuous tides of population," "the tumultuous sea of human heads" (Poe 388-89) that Poe's convalescent-spectator rides, is a human river of white-collar workers on their way to London's financial district, moving at nine o'clock as Eliot (himself "a superior bank clerk") did every morning, from Southwark to London Bridge and then onto King William Street where the Bank of England and other financial institutions stood. Unlike Baudelaire's phantasmagoric crowd with its "multiplicity of life," this human river is starkly monochromatic, homogeneous, and regimented, less lively than even Dante's dead souls. It moves as if involuntarily; even its utterance, the "sighs, short and infrequent," seems more mechanical than expressive. In Dante, the sighs of the damned, however horrible, make the air tremble with their pathos; here they only punctuate an awful silence that has even muffled the sound of the Church's bell, whose sound is "dead."

The involuntariness and unpredictability of the modern crowd which fascinated Baudelaire are replaced by a paralytic repetitiveness, which we can read, given the crowd's make-up and destination, as Eliot's comment on the dehumanization of the modern urbanite whom he had envisioned in an early draft as an insect, part of the "swarming life" of London, who "Vibrates unconscious to its

formal destiny,/Knowing neither how to think, nor how to feel/...burrowing in brick and stone and steel!" In this rejected section, the "observing eye," like Baudelaire's flaneur, records "the motions of these pavement toys," motions which in the Stetson passage are so mechanical that one critic has compared the crowd to marching wooden soldiers (Schwarz 115).

The figure may be more than whimsical, for Donald Childs, in a fairly recent article, has established a connection between the name Stetson and the Anzac troops, Australian and New Zealand soldiers, who, famous for their heroic exploits at Gallipoli in the Dardanelles Campaign (the invasion during which Eliot's friend Jean Verdenal died), were ubiquitous throughout London, especially after 1916 when massive numbers of Anzac troops were transferred through London from the Near East to France.

Stetson, one of the commuters, has been identified by most readers as a twentieth-century Everyman, an ordinary clerk, indistinct from the crowd about him, following his routine. Call him Jones, Smith or Stetson, no matter. Cleanth Brooks, for example, comments that "the name 'Stetson' I take to have no ulterior significance. It is merely an ordinary name such as might be borne by the friend one might see in a crowd in a great city" (93). Refuting the speculation that Stetson is Ezra Pound,

Valerie Eliot confirmed Stetson's perfect prosaicness: "'Stetson' is not Ezra Pound. Eliot said he was not referring to anyone in particular, but simply meant any superior bank clerk: a person in a bowler hat, black jacket, and striped trousers. To a suggestion he had Pound in mind he replied: 'My friend does not dress like that, and he would look rather out of place in King William Street!'" (qtd. in Childs 131).

Affirming that Pound with his Bohemian dress would be an illogical referent for the name "Stetson," Childs nevertheless wonders whether it is "not also the case that bank clerks in general are not adequate referents for the name in question unless, like Stetson, they are found not only in King William Street but also on 'ships at Mylae' and unless, like Stetson again, they not only dress in a certain way and have gardens and dogs, but also have gardens with corpses in them--corpses that dogs want to dig up" (131). Therefore, Stetson must be more than a bank clerk just as the crowd flowing over London Bridge is more than the crowd of commuters one would see on any weekday morning in 1922.

Robert Crawford's discovery of Stetson's relation to the bank clerk Charlie Mears (a character in Rudyard Kipling's short story "The Finest Story in the World" who remembers past lives as an Egyptian galley slave and a

Viking seaman) would explain the abrupt transition from the modern to the ancient here. Kipling's description of the clerk's quandary certainly lies behind The Waste Land's Tiresias: "The plastic mind of the bank-clerk had been overlaid, coloured, and distorted by that which he had read, and the result as delivered was a confused tangle of other voices most like the mutter and hum through a City telephone in the busiest part of the day" (qtd. in Crawford 86-7).

Still the question remains, why the name "Stetson"? Childs, reminding the reader of Eliot's fascination and his taking great care with names, maintains that "Stetson," a peculiar choice of name to represent the ordinary, is a metonym for the Anzac soldier. Although in America the word "Stetson" was a common synonym for the cowboy hat--the ten-gallon hat manufactured and popularized by John Batterson Stetson--in Britain it was, as Childs documents, commonly associated with the large slouch hat worn by the Anzac soldier.

Eliot, like anyone else living in London during the war, would have been familiar with the sight of the Stetson hat. By 1916, when London was full of these soldiers, they had acquired almost celebrity status due to their extraordinary heroism at Gallipoli. On April 25, 1916, to celbrate the Anzac contribution before the troops left for

Australia and New Zealand, a much larger parade was held, one made up of 5,000 Anzac troops. Childs reminds us that this parade through London's financial district included as part of its route both The Waste Land's King William Street and Cornhill Street, where at 17 Cornhill stood the offices of the Colonial and Foreign Department of Lloyd's Bank, one of which belonged to Eliot: "Given the parade route, and given the disruption to the business in the area caused by it, there is every chance that Eliot knew of it or watched it himself--recalling Gallipoli and Verdenal, and associating them thereafter with the famous Australian slouch hat" (145).

The metonymic "Stetson" and the reference to a military campaign by a fellow comrade-in-arms justify developing a third exposure of military troops marching over the bridge and into the heart of London. The phrase "death had undone so many" becomes literal, especially when we consider the disaster that was the Dardanelles Campaign, during which, on May 2, 1915, Eliot's friend Jean Verdenal would die, in Eliot's words, "to be mixed with the mud of Gallipoli" (Criterion 452). The two grand parades in London that marked the opening and closing of the campaign could not disguise the waste of human life: of the 400,000 British troops engaged, 200,000 were casualties; the French suffered an even greater percentage of casualties, losing

more than half of their 79,000 soldiers. After eight months, the Allies were forced to retreat, having gained nothing.

It should be noted, however, that although the speaker may call out to an Anzac soldier, he speaks not of a modern but of an ancient war. Instead of to Gallipoli, we move to the Battle of Mylae, which ended the First Punic War in 260 B.C. But, as many critics have noted, the incongruity is logical. The First World War was regarded as essentially the final military expression of a protracted economic battle between two commercial and political empires. So too were the Punic Wars, fought by two trade rivals for supremacy of the Mediterranean. In addition, both wars ended in settlements that defined peace as the interval between wars. Frustrated by Carthage's endurance, Rome ended any possibility of its enemy's restoration by destroying the city of Carthage, massacring its people, salting the land in and around the city, and in a final forbiddance of any human habitation, dedicating the site of the razed city to the infernal gods--thus coining the phrase "a Carthagenian Peace," a peace established by the utter destruction of one's enemy.

The phrase would appear again in 1919 during the drafting of the Treaty of Versailles, when, as Eleanor Cook reminds us, "the argument for declaring the third war

against Carthage (repeated again and again by Cato the Censor, with his famous refrain Carthago delenda est) was the argument at the center of the controversy over the peace treaties: whether the reviving prosperity of a defeated trade rival could become a danger to the victor." The Treaty's extreme, punitive terms triggered a raging criticism, none so impassioned as that of John Maynard Keynes, who in his resignation as representative and in his subsequent best-selling book The Economic Consequences of Peace (1919) would attack the Treaty as a "Carthagenian Peace." Keynes warned of one sinister consequence of such a peace, that the treaty's harsh conditions would eventually not only oppress the defeated but also the victors themselves. He warned that the Allies invited "their own destruction also, being so deeply and inextricably intertwined with their victims by hidden psychic and economic bonds. . . . If we aim deliberately at the impoverishment of Central Europe, . . . nothing can then delay for very long that final civil war . . . which will destroy, whoever is victor, the civilization and progress of our generation" (qtd. in Cook 350-351). In his work supervising the repayment of German pre-War debts for Lloyd's, Eliot himself was quite familiar with what he called the "knotty points" of the Peace Treaty, that "appalling document" (Letters 368). Keynes's argument, with

which Eliot, according to both Cook and Christopher Ricks, was familiar, paralleled Eliot's and other contemporaries' diagnosis of impending cultural doom. Cook, who traces the influence of Keynes on The Waste Land, observes, "in a poem of 1922, to introduce the battle of Mylae where the reader expects a reference to a World War I battle is to raise chilling questions" (350).

To make parallels between Rome and London was certainly a national habit, but as Cook points out, only rarely at the turn of the century "did they serve to set a question mark against the enterprise of empire itself" (350). In The Waste Land, they do: the transfigurations of a bank clerk into an Anzac soldier, Roman seaman, and underworld inhabitant trace the relations of empire, war, and death. Although one might be tempted, like Cleanth Brooks, to draw from these relations the conclusion that "all wars are one war; all experience one experience" (93) or John T. Mayer's variation, "all wars are one war, all cities one city, all times one time for those bound upon the wheel" (271), we must be careful that, after recognizing the historical parallel between Rome and London, we do not then just universalize the relationship and thereby erase the specific historical context, what Svarny has described as "the spectral atmosphere of post-war london, in which the guilt, shock, and primarily

incomprehension of a traumatized society is manifested and translated through a sequence of historical, cultural, and psychic dislocations" (163).

To universalize the relationship would also erase the feeling of radical dislocation begun by the speaker's cry to Stetson, a cry that will ramble from Roman and Carthagenian ships to buried corpses, about to sprout and bloom, to gardens disturbed, to sinister digging dogs, and to hypocrite readers. To minimalize this dislocation, to normalize the text, we can, if we wish, and as some have, turn Stetson the bank clerk into a horticulturist with a taste for murder and literature or as several critics do, even construct a personal history and a belief system for him, so we can then read the entire passage opened and closed by quotation marks as the utterance of one speaker, the poet, albeit a bit hysterical or lunatic. But this would be to gloss over the passage's strangeness, a strangeness compounded by the instability of voice, despite the presence of direct quotation marks. Is this a dialogue, as Kenner has assumed? If not, if it is the speech of only one character (as most readers affirm), who is this "I" of the Unreal City section? Certainly not Madame Sosostris, the referent of the previous "I". If it is the voice, who reports her divinations, is it replaced in the "Unreal City" passage by another voice, another

"observing eye," another voice on Charlie Mears' crossed phone-line connections? Is the first "you" addressed to Stetson the same "you" of the corpse or the "You!" of which Baudelaire's reader is an appositive? Stetson himself is a presence more figurative than real, whose "chief characteristic," according to Denis Donoghue, "is that he does not answer, though he instigates, the questions addressed to him. Stetson is the name of the interrogation . . . he is an oracle who stirs a nervous quiver of interrogation, and dies out in a line from Baudelaire" (188-89). If the interrogation itself "dies out" in the last line, then the interrogator's voice seems extinguished by the heavy allusiveness of its own speech.

What begins as quoted speech of one speaker to an identified listener reverts into the discourse of quotation, so moving from language as speech to language as text, constructed from the echoes and actual shards of past texts. The corpse in the garden stirs memories of other corpses, such as the corpse under Blake's "A Poison Tree" and Dignam's corpse in Ulysses, regarding which Leopold Bloom says, "Plant him and have done with him" (231). Planted in an English garden, not unlike a lilac or hyacinth bulb, Eliot's corpse resembles the victim of a British murderer who, according to Kenner, "unlike his American counterpart, who in a vast land instinctively puts

distance between himself and the corpse prefers to keep it near at hand; in the garden, or behind the wainscotting" (162). In a poem whose original title came from a Dickens' novel about body-robbing and murder along the Thames and which opens from the perspective of the buried dead, this corpse is one of many that surface, evidence to Kenner and Gregory Jay that the poem hides a story of murder, of the type popularized by the "low crime" press, a type of which Eliot was exceedingly fond.

This potentially sprouting and blooming corpse is also the dead god Osiris, whose annual consolidation and rebirth bring life to the dead land, and is The Golden Bough's ritual figure of the fertility cult, the corn-effigy which buried in the fall is dug up in the spring to check its sprouting. The abrupt, hurried rhythm of the three questions --"Has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom this year?/"Or has the sudden frost disturbed its bed?"-- suggests more than idle curiosity as regards the health of an acquaintance's garden. They suggest anxiety about the expected "blooming" of the corpse in a place where rebirth means not regeneration but the revivification of private and cultural memories that, having lost their restorative power, return to disturb the mind, just as the dead return from their beds to haunt the living. And to return means,

given the implied concealment of a crime, to discover some awful truth, some secret guilt shared by accomplices.

What do, in fact, "sprout" are words--not from a human corpse, but a dead author's literary corpus. The next two lines, "Oh keep the Dog far hence, that's friend to men,/ Or with his nails he'll dig it up again!," as the Notes tell us, indirectly quote lines from John Webster's The White Devil ("But keep the wolf far hence, that's foe to man/For with his nails he'll dig them up again.") Changing Webster's wolf to a dog allows Eliot to play with the possibilities of the dog as symbol. Eliot's capitalization of Dog alludes, as many have noted, to Sirius, the Dog Star, which, although a friend to navigators, symbolized the coming of war, sterility and death. In the Aeneid, Sirius lays waste to the lands around Troy, bringing drought and pestilence. To the ancients, the dog was a scavenger, a symbol of feral energies, corruption, and death yet later would acquire a more genial reputation as "man's best friend," a symbol of loving fidelity and domesticity. Like the dog in Joyce's Ulysses, who with his "rag of wolf's tongue redpanting from his jaws" looks "for something lost in a past life," "vulturing the dead," Eliot's dog disturbs the corpse, uncovering that which it is hoped will remain buried and secret, whether a past

murder or a past murderous to the tranquility of forgetfulness.

Like Webster's other wolf, who, in The Duchess of Malfi, seeks to scrape up the corpse, "Not to devour the corpse, but to discover/The horrid murder," the reader digs, encouraged by indirect citation and by the intricacies of allusion, but before he or she can scrape along too deeply, seeking the corpse in the corpus, the line "You! hypocrite lecteur! -- mon semblable, -- mon frere!" discovers him within the text, shattering the conventional boundaries between readers and texts, thus shattering the illusion that the passage is spoken rather than written. The quotation marks now indicate both the continued direct quotation of a speech and the direct quotation from another text, complicating, in Riquelme's words, "the problem of determining . . . what is and is not quoted and what is and is not speech."

Altered by the English "You!" which connects it to the two you's of the previous lines, Baudelaire's line, like the "blooming" corpse (and like the fleurs du mal which grow from corruption), revives as something other than what it was, torn from its original context, altered by its new location like the literary swag of Eliot's "good poet" who steals to weld "his theft into a whole of feeling which is unique, utterly different from that from which it

was torn." In its present constitution, Eliot's Baudelaire line does bring with it thematic connections, feeding the present with the past, acting as what Eliot in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" called the "present moment of the past," when that which is "already living" separates itself from "what is dead." Yet, despite its formal integration into the "Unreal City" passage, the line retains all the strangeness of the isolated fragment, foreign in its words, alien in its presence: it acts simultaneously as "the present moment of the past" and as the ruin of the past in the present.

Not only does the intrusion of the Baudelaire quotation formally implicate the reader in textual processes, it also implicates him morally by means of the line's thematic import. In Baudelaire's poem "Au Lecteur," the line (appearing of course with a "vous" rather than an "I") indicts its reader who to escape from boredom takes a voluptuary's pleasure in fantasies of violence while safely sheltered from its reality (C'est l'Ennui!--l'oeil chargé d'un pleur involontaire,/Il reve d'echafauds en fumant son houka.") And in Eliot's poem, the Baudelaire address implicates the reader, now brother and double of the writer, in a writing that seems to be able only to occur through a formal and contextual violence. Like the unpleasant but entrancing intimacy of the "you" which Poe's

criminals force upon their readers, the intimacy between writer and reader is one which breaks down their mutual cultivation of a detached spectatorship. Murder, secret crime, war, live burial--the reader is implicated in a polysemous evil that he mistakenly assumes is safely shut up within the fictive and literal boundaries of the text.

The reader faces his double, his brother in hypocrisy by means of the "You!" and the "mon," two pronouns which echo the opening address, "You who were with me [italics mine] in the ships at Mylae!," it too an exclamation bristling with the shock of recognition and the claim of alliance. The three you's link Stetson, their original antecedent, to the reader and Stetson's interlocutor to the writer. Although, as we have seen, Stetson cannot, as sole referent, ultimately shepherd the loose aggregate of pronouns, this silent metonym of war does generate a succession of doubles: brothers-in-arms, war dead and living dead, murderer and accomplice, reader and writer--counterparts arising from a configuration of repeated pasts, both literary and historical, which, resisting assimilation into narrative, expose connections between language and war. Just as Baudelaire's poems grow out of evil, just as the corpse fertilizes next spring's bloom, Eliot's words grow out of the remains of other texts, tracing patterns of mortality both cultural and personal.

The phrase "Unreal City" will reappear again in "The Fire Sermon" to introduce another London scene, set at noon of a winter's day, during which Tiresias, another underworld inhabitant, makes his way through the city. And in "What the Thunder Said," the city will reappear again, although now exploding in an apocalyptic vision of war that joins the destruction of ancient and modern empires to the Slaughter of the Innocents and the post-war civil conflict of Eastern Europe. Only "Unreal" is cited, the word "City" itself absent, formally swallowed by the passage:

> What is that sound high in the air
> Murmur of maternal lamentation
> Who are those hooded hordes swarming
> Over endless plains, stumbling in cracked earth
> Ringed by the flat horizon only
> What is the city over the mountains
> Cracks and reforms and bursts in the violet air
> Falling towers
> Jerusalem Athens Alexandria
> Vienna London
> Unreal

London's "Falling towers," once the White Towers of "The Fire Sermon" now become London Bridge, "falling down falling down falling down," which once carried the protean crowd of commuters, soldiers, and ghosts. We know from Ronald Bush that this nightmare of London's destruction--specifically its falling bridges and its hallucinatory quality--owes much to a real nightmare purportedly dreamt by Bertrand Russell, who related it to Eliot during the period that Eliot was working on <u>The Waste Land</u>: "After

seeing troop trains departing from Waterloo, I used to have strange visions of London as a place of unreality. I used in imagination to see the bridges collapse and sink, and the whole great city vanish like a morning mist. Its inhabitants began to seem like hallucinations, and I would wonder whether the world in which I thought I had lived was a mere product of my own febrile nightmares . . . . I spoke of this to T. S. Eliot, who put it into The Waste Land" (qtd. in Bush 249). In Eliot's lines the gothic rhetoric of nightmare collapses into the childish sing-song of nursery rhyme, gravity collapsing into a giddiness that speaks less of flippancy than of the coming disintegration of poetic voice into a series of quotations, now momentarily unburdened by the appropriating, or as Eliot would have it, the "amalgamating" voice of modernity.

Fragments from Dante, the Pervigilium Veneris, Tennyson, Nerval, Kyd, and the Upanishads lie next to each other, fragments with which the poet sets his lands in order, ruins he has shored against his own ruin. How these quotations relate to the poem's themes has been extensively studied, but what has not been noticed is that buried within the ruins of these quotations, specifically in the quotation from the Pervigilium Veneris, lies the ruin of another city destroyed, its destruction linked to a failure of language. If we complete Eliot's allusion to the

Pervigilium Veneris, we will find, at the end of that anonymous Latin poem, reference to a city destroyed by silence:

> quando fiam uti chelidon ut tacere desinam?
> perdidi musam tacendo, nec me Apollo respicit:
> sic Amyclas, cum tacerent, perdidit silentium.
>
> [when shall I be as the swallow, that I may cease to be voiceless? I have lost the Muse in silence, nor does Apollo regard me: so Amyclae, being mute, perished by silence.]

Most commentators believe that the legend of Amyclae, a city destroyed by silence, referred to the city by that name a few miles from Sparta which was famous for its sanctuary dedicated to Apollo and Hyacinth (considering the importance of the Hyacinth myth to The Waste Land, it might be appropriate to mention that Hyacinth, according to legend, was the son of King Amyclas, ruler of Amyclae.) Reportedly surviving intermittent siege by the Dorians for over a hundred years, Amyclae was finally captured and completely destroyed because, according to Servius, the late Latin Virgilian commentator, its citizens, "broken by terror" and rumor, were prohibited by a "broad law" even to speak of possible attack. Consequently, when the Dorians came, the city perished because of its silence, hence the proverb of "taciturnus Amyclae" or "silentia Amyclae" (Clementi 263-69).

Like Amyclae, invisible and silent, the poet of The Waste Land is figuratively disfigured, invisible in his art and voiceless because of language's failure to be anything but repetitive and belated. Voicelessness and the agonistic force of silence produce the proliferation of other voices, other languages, noises and other signs of the inarticulate which, paradoxically, give to the poet his song, a song that arises out of the violations of history. Thus, the Latin poet can "cease to be voiceless" through transfiguring his voice into that of the swallow, Procne, who names the criminal or that of the nightingale, Philomela, who sings in "inviolable voice" of her violation. And Hieronymo can reveal the murder of his son through the cryptic collection of his play's "unknown and sundry languages."

The formal violence of collection, of citation, reveals a poetic stratagem of double intent--on the one hand, to transform the violations of history through a language already disfigured and insufficient; and, on the other hand, to be an epitaph for poetry. For if poetry can be written in The Waste Land only through the linguistic disfigurement and the personal effacement that citation provides, then the very method of citation may be seen as a trope for the end of a poetry that can find its voice only in the languages of the inarticulate and in verbal

repetition. Itself scarred by violence and violation, the poem through its stratagem to transform the violations of history into song, deconstructs itself, every form of verbal repetition, every "withered stump of time," only repeating the conditions of violation and repression, able only to gesture to a silence whose fluencies adumbrate the absent voice of God.

CHAPTER FOUR

FOUR QUARTETS: ELIOT'S DEAD PATROL

On August 9, 1930, Eliot, in a letter to William Force Stead, speculated that "between the usual subjects of poetry and 'devotional' verse, there is a very important field still very unexplored by modern poets--the experience of man in search of God, and trying to explain to himself his intenser human feelings in terms of the divine goal" (qtd. in Gardner 29). Five years later, just before the Second World War, Eliot would begin writing of such a journey in "Burnt Norton," a journey that would end in "Little Gidding," completed during the darkest period of the war. The idea of a sequence of four poems, each articulating a different perspective on temporal loss and the search for origin, and each interacting with the other like the patterning of themes in a musical quartet, came to Eliot only after the completion and publication of "Burnt Norton," when the economic and public hazards of war forced the closing of theaters in London, compelling Eliot to turn away from his playwriting and back to poetry. The war, according to Eliot, "destroyed that impulse for a time, the

conditions of one's life changed, and one was thrown in on oneself" (qtd. in Sinclair 110).

Although Eliot had already abandoned the radically hermetic styles of The Waste Land and Ash Wednesday for a more discursive poetry of 'statement,' a poetry more suitable to the practical demands of the stage, as well as to his increasing emphasis on what he called "the social function of poetry," the war encouraged the extension of the personal themes of "Burnt Norton" into the public and broadly religious and patriotic themes of the next three quartets. Although their thematic and formal multiplicity overwhelms the normally one-dimensional category of war poetry, the last three quartets can be read as war poems--Eliot himself, after all, said that they were "in a sense war poems"--their temper conditioned by their inception and completion during the war.[1] And, in a first draft of his lecture "The Three Voices of Poetry," he described the last three quartets as being "primarily patriotic poems" (qtd. in Ackroyd 264), only to delete the phrase on revision, a deletion understandable in a period of history which had painfully revealed the thin line between patriotism and the atrocities of political and religious ideologies. Yet to its first audience (with the exception of the colder eyes

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[1] In the 1958 lecture "T. S. Eliot Talks About his Poetry."

of readers like those of the acutely disappointed George Orwell who whimpered about the poems' "gloomy mumblings"), the poems were generally accepted as patriotic poems, their themes and symbols closely reacting to specific political and social needs.

"East Coker"'s historical theme, for example, its address of the antiquity and endurance of English history and tradition, is timely, given the poem's being written and published during the confused and frightening time of the "Phoney War" when an invasion of England seemed immanent. Eliot's use of figures of war in the fifth section of "East Coker" to express the poet's struggle with words, the

> . . . raid on the inarticulate
> With shabby equipment always deteriorating
> In the general mess of imprecision of feeling,
> Undisciplined squads of emotion

was, as Angus Calder states, certainly topical in 1940 when the average British citizen, waiting for war to begin in earnest, would have been called to repress his emotions through discipline: "Having 'shabby equipment' (the Home Guard at first in some places drilled with broomsticks) was no excuse for not 'trying.' The citizen's job was to try, and not to reason why--'The rest is not our business.' Sub-textually this section can be read as a Conservative

utterance . . . in favour of unquestioning natural unity in a common struggle to 'recover what has been lost'" (150-51).

The American themes of "Dry Salvages"--Eliot's return to his American memories and his tribute to the heritage of the American explorer and sailor, in the context of the stoic call to "Fare forward"--may have expressed for British and American readers their shared heritage and Eliot's support of Britain's vigorous campaign to convince the U.S. to come into the war. And the allusion in the third section to Krishna's exhortation to Arjuna to fight even against his kin, secure in the equipoise of detachment, can be read as part of the poem's exhortation to disinterested, self-sacrificing action in the face of increasing and necessary violence. The poem's maritime themes and its prayer for the souls of dead seamen came at the height of the "Battle of the Atlantic," in which U-boats sank hundreds of British and neutral merchant ships carrying much needed supplies to Britain. The fourth section's prayer "on behalf of/ Women who have seen their sons or husbands/ Setting forth, and not returning," would have had more than a general significance.

And in "Little Gidding," the first draft of which was written during the worst bombing of London (3,000 killed on one night), Eliot integrated his experiences as an air raid

warden with a Dantesque purgatorial vision, evoking the common experience of the terrifying Blitz and offering a visionary context larger than the present terrifying one, a context which offered in the calm reassurance of "And all shall be well and/ All manner of thing shall be well" the faith in what Kathleen Raine, in praise of Eliot's achievement, then called "the language of humanity" at a time when victory seemed doubtful.

To their first audience, the poems were received with an intensity of gratitude and reverence difficult, maybe impossible, to recreate outside of their specific wartime context. Lyndall Gordon has astutely recognized that the consolations of the last lines, in which human suffering and divine love are reconciled through the mystical symbol of the rose, "remains a mere formula unless it touches the life of the reader." We have only to contrast the pique of Graham Martin and Bernard Bergonzi's comments on the Quartets (Cf. 18) with the comments of its first readers. Lyndall Gordon refers to the wartime reminiscences of Mary Lee Settle, an American novelist living in London during the war. Settle "recalled the impact of Four Quartets when there really was 'dust in the air' and the ruined rows of houses stood like empty husks, their wall paper stained with rain. At a time when people queued for rations and suffered loss and privation, Eliot 'had somehow refined

what he had to tell us, beyond the banality of disappointment and hopelessness, into a promise like steel.' That first generation of readers responded to a promise of recovery made with a 'miraculous effrontery of spirit' in the face of years of wrong" (144). Noel Annan, in his recent memoir of British intellectual life during the war, remembered how "As each Quartet appeared during the war in its paper cover, you were humbled. Eliot's modesty and gentleness reminded you of other worlds of sin, repentance and death whether or not you were a Christian. He did not call you to righteousness as the left-wing poets of the thirties did. He asked you to live a little less trivial a life" (62).

Yet it was the charge of triviality that worried Eliot as he wrote the poems. To his friend Mary Hutchinson, Eliot worried that if the poems were badly written, their triviality and superfluousness would be emphasized (Ackroyd 263). And in a 1942 letter to Martin Browne, Eliot expressed what was a common worry among writers of the time, the sense of uselessness, and, more important, the sense of impropriety at working on verse in the midst of conflagration: "It is one thing to see what was best worth one's while doing, in a distant retrospect: but in the midst of what is going on now, it is hard, when you sit down at a desk, to feel confident that morning after

morning spent fiddling with words and rhythms is a justified activity -- especially as there is never any certainty that the whole thing won't have to be scrapped. And on the other hand, external or public activity is more of a drug than is this solitary toil which often seems so pointless" (qtd. in Gardner 21).

Eliot's misgivings concerning his "fiddling with words and rhythms"--a phrase which echoes Henry James's concern at "putting into play mere fiddlesticks"--his fear of being charged with triviality, may have arisen from the enormous difficulty of what Eliot was attempting to do and not to do. He was not attempting to write a "war poetry," in the standard sense but only, as he said, "in a sense;" indeed, the Four Quartets do not fit either of his two categories of war poetry as defined in the 1942 "Poetry in Wartime" essay, written in the same month "Little Gidding" was first published. Despite the nature of their first reception and the strong patriotic tone of certain passages, the poems are far too private and far too thematically and formally complex to be classified as a poetry that "expresses and stimulates pride in the military virtues of a people;" and they certainly are not the "private poetry" of the soldier-poet. But in the 1942 essay, the point from which this discussion began, Eliot implies another possible avenue for a poet writing in wartime, another avenue over and above

the essay's general exhortation to poets to "preserve and enrich" the heritage of their language.

As we have discussed, Eliot states that to write of war with the kind of understanding necessary to the writing of poetry, the experience of war had to "become part of a man's whole past," to be integrated with other parts of experience, distanced from the exigencies and distracting attachments of the present moment, and it, according to Eliot, would probably "bear fruit in something very different from what, during time of war, people call 'war poetry.'" The contemporaneous, the present moment, must fall back into a larger "life," for, as The Waste Land enacts with the "discourse of quotation" and the Four Quartets reveals through the technique of psychological retrospection, the present experience cannot speak to us until it is part of the past, where although dead in a sense, it yet lives in its potential to be transfigured by the creative act of re-membrance, and in turn, to transform the present. As the moment remembered can never be the experienced moment itself, so the experience transformed in the poetry will "bear fruit in something very different."

Yet from 1940 to 1942 Eliot did (in some sense) write of his and others' experience of war while he was in the midst of it, not years after the experience had become part of his past. And that experience of war was only one part

of a whole spectrum of past and present experience quoted, re-collected, and transformed into the Four Quartets. To become "part of a man's whole past," then, also meant to become part of a past figured into a "poetry," not the isolated poem that might be generated out of the shock of war, but the "poetry," which, in his "Note on War Poetry," as we have discussed earlier, Eliot described as a "life" set in opposition to the situation of war:

> It seems just possible that a poem might happen
> To a very young man: but a poem is not poetry--
> That is a life.
>
> War is not a life: it is a situation,
> One which may neither be ignored nor accepted,
> A problem to be met with ambush and stratagem,
> Enveloped and scattered.

The "life" as a poetry, the "poetry" as a life; the war figured into the life, itself figured into the poetry. But first, to the life figured as a poetry.

In the Four Quartets, the autobiographical impulse draws the poetic self's encounters with the contradictions of existence in time, with those enigmas of temporality and mortality, into the ambush of form, which seeks to re-enact and, as James Olney has demonstrated, "to refigure past experience as present consciousness" (265), and thereby to find a vital pattern ("a poetry") in the life, a whole of feeling that parallels and participates in a larger transcendent pattern of eternity, "the still point of the

turning world . . . /Where past and future are gathered." But the search for this pattern involves the sad knowledge of language's ultimate limitations in charting the elusive and fugitive feelings of the "unbounded," of the center (whether of absence or presence is at this point irrelevant), of that which resists the full reach of language.

In his lecture "Poetry and Drama," Eliot granted a higher privilege to music, which he thought came closest, of all the forms of art, to reaching the "indefinite extent of feeling," the "border" of which "only music can express." Although poetry moves in the same direction as music, seeking essentially "an unattainable ideal," "we can never emulate music, because to arrive at the condition of music would be the annihilation of poetry" (93).

The Four Quartets, as even its title implies, encourages, however, comparison of its form to musical structures; we know that Eliot was initially inspired by Beethoven's late quartets and that the structure of the quartet suggested to him "the notion of making a poem by weaving in together three or four superficially unrelated themes: the 'poem' being the degree of success in making a new whole out of them" (Letter to John Hayward qtd. in Gardner 26). In "The Music of Poetry," a lecture given in the same year as the publication of the Four Quartets,

Eliot said that the poet and the musician shared the same concern with "the sense of rhythm and the sense of structure," and speculated that because the "use of recurrent themes is as natural to poetry as to music," there "are possibilities for verse which bear some analogy to the development of a theme by different groups of instruments; there are possibilities of transitions in a poem comparable to the different movements of a symphony or a quartet; there are possibilities of contrapuntal arrangement of subject-matter" (32).

Some readers, such as Gabriel Pearson, for example, have found the musical analogy of the Four Quartets suspect:

> This analogy is infinitely fertile, infinitely seductive. It dissolves the most resistent linearities of the discursive mode, bending them back upon themselves, making them answerable to the logic of metaphor and myth. In the timeless image, the tough contradictions of history are reconciled. It is a musical Hegelianism, the antinomies of experience resolved and transcended in the higher term, which is the very form of their expression" ("King Log" 34).

And the British poet Geoffrey Hill, more directly hostile to Eliot's method in the Four Quartets, attacks "the expansive, outward gesture towards the condition of music" as a "helpless gesture of surrender, oddly analogous to that stylish aesthetic of despair, that desire of the ultimate integrity of silence, to which so much eloquence has been so frequently and indefatigably devoted" (9).

Although both Pearson's and Hill's judgments accurately diagnose strong tendencies in Eliot's poetry and characteristics of his poetic temper--the attraction to the serene purity of silence, the obsession with transcendence of dichotomies into the reconciliation of formal wholes--they seem to assume that the choice of the musical analogy in the Four Quartets wholly rests on the conventional notion of music as an immaterial art, a "spiritual" phenomenon, linked in its immateriality to the transcendent, to the "timeless image," as well as assuming that Eliot's use of a "musical form" is an attempt to erase dichotomies through the transcendence into form.

On the contrary, Eliot's alliance of poetry and music rests, in addition to their dependence on material, on their mutual dependence on temporality, on their both being "arts of time." Thus in "Burnt Norton," Eliot writes,

> Words move, music moves
> Only in time; but that which is only living
> Can only die. Words, after speech, reach
> Into the silence. Only by the form, the pattern,
> Can words or music reach
> The stillness, as a Chinese jar still
> Moves perpetually in its stillness.

Only really living in the time of their actual execution, both words and music begin and end as the coming into being and the falling into death of sound. Etienne Gilson, labeling music "the art of that which is to die," describes

it as an art which aspires to its own death because "its parts must fall back into nothingness one by one so that the whole, of which they are elements, can come into being." And like music, poetry is made up of sounds which also move through time (whether read or heard involves the sometimes complicating difference between external and internal soundings): "If the genuine poem is made of words actually heard, no poem ever exists in its material totality; only one line of poetry at a time can exist and of this line only one word, and of this word only one syllable or vocal emission" (217).

Unable to embody the simultaneity of form of the plastic arts, such as that of a Chinese jar, words and music can only achieve their wholeness, the "form, the pattern," outside of their own materiality, beyond the "stillness of the violin," through the intervening intelligence of memory which structures sound into living significations, into wholes of rhythm and meaning. Without the intervention of memory, as Gilson (echoing Augustine) notes, the elements of musical and poetic sound "would fall back into the void of silence as they fade if memory did not forget this unity by endowing these elements with at least a temporary subsistence and a mode of intellectuality" (146).

The Four Quartets encourages analogies between music, poetry, and autobiography because of their shared relations to mortality and time. Music's temporality, its paradoxical dependence on its own demise for its very existence, parallels poetry's exploitation of the reciprocal movement of creation and loss that is the movement of the word in time. And as music's and poetry's achievement of form is inseparable from a resignation to their own insufficiency, autobiographical art begins with and is impossible without the coming into being and the falling into death of experience, which is the life of consciousness in time. As each musical note must fall back into the silence so that the whole may be composed by memory, so the present experience, if it is to have any meaning, must "die" and become part of the past where it can be refigured and redeemed by the creative act of memory into present consciousness, because immediate experience cannot be intelligible until it ceases to be lived:

> We had the experience but missed the meaning,
> And approach to the meaning restores the experience
> In a different form.

The form must always be different because memory is not a bond servant to the past, its compositions never faithful reproductions, never, as Olney states, the "orderly summoning up of something dead--a sort of Final Judgment on

past events." In short, memory does not begin "in the far-distant past . . . that then follows a course to the present" (264).

However much an "art of time," like music and poetry, autobiography also can be, because of its impulse to origin, an art of modernité, its repossession of the past motivated by its compulsion to bring the significance and the completion of form to the fragile presentness of consciousness. George Steiner, discussing the relation of poesis to self-portraiture, states that "self-portraiture is the most adversarial mode of creation," because it expresses the artist's "compulsion to freedom,. . . his agonistic attempt to repossess, to achieve mastery over the forms and meanings of his own being" in the face of "the servitude of his unwilled, unchosen coming into the world, and in the face of the absurd, unnaming logic of death" (Presences 205, 206). Thus in the self-portraits of Rembrandt, the contrast of emergent form and surrounding darkness expresses the coming into being of a self, or more accurately, of a persona, out of a dark nothingness which precedes and frames it, the darkness of death held at bay by the formal seizure of the painter's face in time.

To create a portrait of the present self through the movement of language, however, necessitates the return to and the integration of what Olney describes as "all the

old, half-remembered, or perhaps misremembered selves, which were adequate to their own proper moments, into the pattern of the new self, which is born in the moment now out of this very exercise of consciousness and memory" (264-65). In the Four Quartets, the creation of such a pattern involves the problematic discrepancy between form and experience and the resultant provisionality of present consciousness. The "now" of our consciousness ordinarily exists only as two simultaneous movements in time: first, the falling back into the past and the subsequent modification of "all we have been," which is memory, and second, the springing forward into the future, which is perception. Thus, the present, never self-originating, exists as a collapse into the past or, to borrow Bergson's image, a treading upon the future (180)[2]. The return to and the integration of the past into the present, which makes identity and self-consciousness possible, therefore, must be a continual process of transformation.

But in the Four Quartets, the presence of consciousness is not synonymous with the present of

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[2] My argument here is indebted to Bergson's definition of the simultaneity of memory and perception in his discussion of the phenomenon of deja vu: "I hold that the formation of memory is never posterior to the formation of perception; it is contemporaneous with it. Step by step, as perception is created, the memory of it is projected beside it, as the shadow falls beside the body" (157-58).

ordinary consciousness. In "Burnt Norton," we are told that

> Time past and time future
> Allow but a little consciousness.
> To be conscious is not to be in time.

We only achieve true consciousness in rare moments when time feels suspended and reality seems a fullness of being gathered within a moment of eternity. Inexpressible, except through metaphor, and unlocalizable like Bradley's "immediate experience," it comes as

> . . . the unattended
> Moment, the moment in and out of time,
> The distraction fit, lost in a shaft of sunlight,
> The wild thyme unseen, or the winter lightning
> Or the waterfall, or music heard so deeply
> That it is not heard at all, but you are the music
> While the music lasts.

This "presence of consciousness" lives as music lives; somatic and interior, it passes away and dissolves into "waste sad time/Stretching before and after," leaving behind the feeling that just for a moment we returned, as in the <u>deja vu</u>, to a place of origin, "the first world" of the rose-garden:

> I can only say, <u>there</u> we have been: but I cannot say where
> And I cannot say, how long, for that is to place it in time.

Because these experiences, like the mystic's, come with the force of the inarticulate and can only be expressed through the indirection and displacement of the figurative, the form of the <u>Four Quartets</u>, paralleling

memory's constant return to and figuration of the past into the present, brings these experiences within the circumference of poetry's reach by the process of repetition and transfiguration of images, words, rhythms, and styles. Hugh Kenner first stated that the last three quartets "exfoliate" from the transcendent "moment in the rose-garden" of "Burnt Norton," many of their images and figures a compression and repetition of those from the opening quartet (Invisible 296), yet each quartet also spirals out from other personal experiences with the timeless, their figures also drawn into the concentric patterning of the poetry.

This "motif technique," according to James Olney, evokes and yet transforms the past as each motif acquires new and richer significances with its introduction and reintroduction into new contexts offered by the overall pattern, which like that of music, embodies both the circular return and integration of memory and the linear movement of the present's progress into the future.

There are many pasts, however, which are repeated. Most immediately, the poems repeat their own pasts, if again we think of them as existing in the time of their reading; earlier passages are quoted, integrated, and thereby transformed into larger patterns of meaning. Lyndall Gordon has compared this pattern of repetition to

the essays of Emerson "where each sentence is self-contained but repeats, in different terms, the same idea" and Whitman's use of the sermon's tactic where each "unit, whether homely or poetic, is designed to awaken the audience on different levels, to the same revelation" (96-97). Therefore, the repetition and interplay of beginnings and ends: the opening line of "East Coker"--"In my beginning is my end"--is quoted in reversal at the quartet's closing, "In my end is my beginning," and again picked up and modified in "Dry Salvages":

> When time stops and time is never ending;
> And the ground swell, that was from the beginning

and finally completed in the last section of "Little Gidding" with the lines

> What we call the beginning is often the end
> And to make an end is to make a beginning.

Framing the poet's imaginative progress from East Coker to the America of his childhood memories of St. Louis, the Mississippi and Cape Ann and back to the present moment in the church at Little Gidding, each repetition complicates the poet's own repetition of his "beginnings" and "ends," by expanding the poet's experience into a larger circumference of beginnings and endings, which includes the pasts of others before him. Thus his journey repeats his ancestor Andrew Elyot's voyage to America and by implication, the Puritan journey away from history into

the experiment of modernity, parallelling the poet's own search for origin.

The rupture in time at the open field in East Coker offers the melancholic vision of sixteenth-century Breughel-like peasants at dance. The rhythms of their circling and leaping, of their "Feet rising and falling" over the dirt which covers those gone before them now "nourishing the corn," keep the time of cyclical death and rebirth, of "Dung and death." The fall into the darkness of death is repeated in the third section's fall into the darkness of history of the contemporary "eminent," whether "industrial lords and petty contractors," or "generous patrons of art, the statesmen and the rulers." And at the end of the quartet, before the poet's journey to America, we will find that the pattern of the life fulfilled in the poetry repeats the patterns of other lives, of "dead and living":

> . . . Not the intense moment
> Isolated, with no before and after,
> But a lifetime burning in every moment
> And not the lifetime of one man only
> But of old stones that cannot be deciphered.

And in "Dry Salvages," the poet will "repeat"

> . . . I have said before
> That the past experience revived in the meaning
> Is not the experience of one life only
> But of many generations.

There is yet one more life, one more past repeated and transformed in the poem, that of the reader.

Unlike The Waste Land, in which the "discourse of quotation" foregrounds the "written-ness," the scripted word, encouraging spatial metaphors (such as the montage or the cubist work), words in the Four Quartets announce themselves as voiced, as sounds falling through a surrounding silence into the echo chamber of the reader's consciousness, seeking the engagement of memory:

> Footfalls echo in the memory
> Down the passage which we did not take
> Towards the door we never opened
> Into the rose-garden. My words echo
> Thus, in your mind.

Before we get to the last sentence, we are in the position of an audience, invisible and disinterested, reading of another "we," of the poet and someone else, and of their remembrance figured as the movement of footfalls down a passage, but the last sentence's startling address to us localizes our consciousness within the poem so that the sounds of the footfalls echoing become also the sound of Eliot's words moving through our memory, the figurative "passage" of memory becoming the literal "passage" of the text which passes into the interior corridors of our memory (a word-play similar to "Gerontion"'s punning with textual and cranial "passages").

The identification of words as sounds made living significations by the memory does more here, of course, than merely reveal the crucial dependence, as defined by Gilson, of poetry and music on memory and time. The poet's words, echoing in our minds, engage our own act of memory so that we join the "footfalls" of the poet's imaginative retrospection of the rose garden. Unlike the Stetson passage of The Waste Land, where the reader's presence is discovered, condemned and banished by the force of exclamation, here the reader is gently invited in, made part of the journey of the poem. From this point on, we follow the directions of the poet's voice, bringing to those figures of consciousness our own, becoming part of the process of expansion from the private experience to representative experience. Thus, the studied, ahistorical abstractness of much of the poems' figures--the rose, the garden, children laughing in the leaves, the waterfall, dust, sunlight and lightning, movement and stillness--and the related submersion of the specific personal sources of many of these figures are meant to evoke a universal experience. James Olney states that in the poet's disappearance into "patterns of universalized experience," in the disappearance of the "personal and historic Eliot," the "I" and the "we" are transformed into "not the historic and typical but the representative and symbolic" (305).

The impulse behind this transformation of the private into the universal, or to go back to the "Note on War Poetry,"

> the abstract conception
> Of private experience at its greatest intensity
> Becoming universal, which we call 'poetry',

is part of the attempt to create what I earlier called "a life above a life," a wholeness completed through a moving pattern whose details are formed by the repetition of history in consciousness. And in this "life," which is the "poetry" of the Four Quartets, war functions in two ways. First, war, as the general historical context of the poems, in its immediate danger impels the poem's search for a transcendent pattern, serving as a menacing counterpoint to the poem's ascending rhythms. Second, as in the "Note on War Poetry" in which the war is "enveloped and scattered" by the form of the symbolic, the historical reality of war is transfigured into a trope for the poet's own war with language and tradition to create the perfection of the symbol which will draw into and around itself, like the "still point," the past and future. This figural merging of war and literary construction, however, as in Gerontion and The Waste Land, exposes the ultimate failure of poetry to transcend history, but in The Four Quartets, the failure is revealed as one without which poetry could not exist because its form is always in some sense a hybrid of that

which is dying and empty and that which is present and living, just as music's "victorious ability to affirm the being that it creates is inseparable from its essential resignation to its own demise" (Gilson 146).

The theme of return and repetition in the Four Quartets, or to use Olney's phrase, of "recall and recapitulation," extends to Eliot's own body of work (another of the repeated pasts of the poems), and in "East Coker" and "Little Gidding," the figuration of war occurs in passages that recall and respond to passages in "Gerontion" and in The Waste Land, where we have already traced the merging of historical and formal violence. But before we extend the Four Quartets' "quotations" into other poems, we must first look at how the second and fifth sections of "East Coker" return to and transform the corresponding sections of "Burnt Norton."

Close studies by many readers have demonstrated how the quartets' five-part structures thematically and formally parallel each other. For example, the second sections of "Burnt Norton" and "East Coker" both open in a lyrical style which then dissipates into a more discursive, "philosophic" style, and the fifth sections of each poem deal with the issue of language, but another parallel exists. The lyrics of the second sections both involve the enclosure of violence and war by the aesthetic, and the

figures of war in "East Coker"'s second and fifth sections repeat, complicate, and finally critique this enclosure of historical violence.

The opening of the second section of "Burnt Norton," a lyric in the symbolist style that even echoes Mallarme,[3] celebrates the reconcilement of opposites through the ascending pattern of correspondences figured in the rhythms of a music and dance of being:

> Garlic and sapphires in the mud
> Clot the bedded axle-tree.
> The trilling wire in the blood
> Sings below inveterate scars
> And reconciles forgotten wars.
> The dance along the artery
> The circulation of the lymph
> Are figured in the drift of stars
> Ascend to summer in the tree
> We move above the moving tree
> In light upon the figured leaf
> And hear upon the sodden floor
> Below, the boarhound and the boar
> Pursue their pattern as before
> But reconciled among the stars.

History's "inveterate scars," its "forgotten wars," its predators and victims pursuing the endless cycle of aggression and death, which fashions history's narrative, are absorbed into a pattern of ascending correspondences spiralling from the ground of the inorganic through the vitality of the animate and finally to the heavens, where

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[3] See Mallarme's "M'introduire dans ton histoire," where occurs the line "Tonnerre et rubis aux moyeux," and see "Le tombeau de Charles Baudelaire," where the image of "boue et rubis" occurs (174).

the eternal forms of the constellations figure and reconcile the mortal configurations below into one eternal, unmoving pattern.

Five years later, in a time of war, the poet returns in "East Coker"'s second section, the most melancholic section of the quartets, to repeat and to critique the lyrical enclosure and transcendence of war, a lyricism that in the context of war must seem a dangerous naivete. Like the "Burnt Norton" passage, the "East Coker" lyric continues in the symbolist style to express the mirroring of the heavenly in the earthly, mortal patterns reflecting the immortal. Mallarme's line "Tonnerre et rubis aux moyeux" now gives Eliot the "Thunder" which "Simulates triumphal cars," cars alluding to the last line of Mallarme's "M'introduire dans ton histoire": "Du seul vesperal de mes chars." Seasonal chaos replaces the languid summer of the moving leaf figured in the light; movements of frustrated ascent, the falling movements of "writhing" and "tumbling down" contrast with the oscillating harmony of descent and ascent along the "summer in the tree," the axle-tree:

> What is the late November doing
> With the disturbance of the spring
> And creatures of the summer heat,
> And snowdrops writhing under feet
> And hollyhocks that aim too high
> Red into grey and tumble down
> Late roses filled with early snow?

Climatic disturbances mirror astrological wars, where stars no longer drifting, no longer reconciling "forgotten wars" by their constellated patterns, whirl in their own hostilities, the Sun and the Moon going down just as the hollyhocks below "tumble down":

> Thunder rolled by the rolling stars
> Simulates triumphal cars
> Deployed in constellated wars
> Scorpion fights against the Sun
> Until the Sun and Moon go down.

The boarhound's chase of the boar becomes in heaven a hunt through Eliot's pun on the Leonids, meteor showers, which like comets, in their rarity portend historical calamity:

> Comets weep and Leonids fly
> Hunt the heavens and the plains
> Whirled in a vortex that shall bring
> The world to that destructive fire
> Which burns before the ice-cap reigns.

The lyric's whirling vortex of apocalypse and its extravagant diction return us both to the thematic vortex of "fractured atoms" and to the voluptuary rhetoric of "Gerontion." Although the "East Coker" lyric reverses the theme of the "Burnt Norton" lyric by contrasting cosmic war with universal reconciliation, it nevertheless repeats the distancing and refining effects of the formal enclosure of the violent--effects that are abruptly suspended by the intrusion of the poet's censoring comments, which, in their

dry, colloquial tone and discursive style expose the artificiality and irrelevancy of the lyric:

> That was a way of putting it--not very satisfactory:
> A periphrastic study in a worn-out poetical fashion.

The censure here involves, however, more than the abandonment of the outmoded symbolist style in favor of a more contemporary one. The issue concerns the lyric's failure to figure "it"--the war. The lyric's periphrasis, its attempt to circumlocute and thus to displace the reality of war into the aesthetic, is rejected,

> Leaving one still with the intolerable wrestle
> With words and meanings.

The figuration of war returns to its point of origin, the poet's own war with language to represent and thus to bring an intelligibility to the historical situation at hand. The ensuing lines then orchestrate an intricate pattern of ambiguous reference that brings together poetry, history, and war:

> . . . The poetry does not matter.
> It was not (to start again) what one had expected

The "It" here can refer to its immediate antecedent, "the poetry," and thus, can indicate both the poet's despondent recognition of the irrelevancy of his medium in the larger movements of history and, more immediately, his abandonment of the lyric mode as a viable vehicle for his meaning. He will "start again" in another discourse. The "It,"

however, can also refer to what the poetry was trying to communicate in the first place, to the "it" of "That was a way of putting it"--to the war figured in the opening lyric. To "start again," to attempt again to represent the war as history's "horrific capability," is to backtrack over the rhetorical euphony of Eliot's lyric and, in turn, because of the lyric's echoing of the grandiloquence of Gerontion's words, to return to the themes of "Gerontion," except now, because "the poetry does not matter," "Gerontion"'s deploring of history's betrayal returns <u>divested</u> of its rhetorical theatrics:

> What was to be the value of the long looked forward to,
> Long hoped for calm, the autumnal serenity
> And the wisdom of age? Had they deceived us
> Or deceived themselves, the quiet-voiced elders,
> Bequeathing us merely a receipt for deceit?
> The serenity only a deliberate hebetude,
> The wisdom only the knowledge of dead secrets
> Useless in the darkness into which they peered
> Or from which they turned their eyes.

Gerontion's hebetude, his blindness, and his deceits as figures for the consciousness of Europe confused by the shock of the First World War return again in a new context of another world war, one which again has revealed the discrepancy between expectations of historical and moral progress and "what the treacherous years were all the while making for." Because poetry is also a historical

"receipt," in the sense of a recipe or formula[4], it participates in and is engendered by all the "recipes for deceit," the formulas of the historian, the politician, the artist, of all the "quiet-voiced elders" of literary history, as Eliot's own "periphrastic" formula deceives in its figuration of the violence of war into its eloquent textures.

But Eliot here returns to a former poetry, in a way to a former version of his poetic self, returns not just, as he feared time and again to John Hayward during the drafting of the poems,[5] to repeat himself but rather to integrate and to transfigure "Gerontion"'s old fear of history's betrayal and its resultant suspicion of the historically sedimented nature of language into a present awareness of the necessary provisionality and distortion of all constructs:

> The knowledge imposes a pattern, and falsifies,
> For the pattern is new in every moment
> And every moment is a new and shocking
> Valuation of all we have been.

Nevertheless, in the face of the incomprehensibility of a history whose rationale repeatedly defeats our willed forms

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[4] Answering John Hayward's puzzlement over the word's meaning, Eliot explained that he meant "Receipt, I mean of course in the sense of recipe or formula" (qtd. in Gardner 101).

[5] See selections from the Eliot-Hayward correspondence in Gardner 23-25.

and comprehension, we are left, not in Dante's "middle way," but "all the way, in a dark wood."

The immediate concern with imposing an aesthetic form upon the "situation" of war, with which the section opens, by the end of the section has been integrated into a larger problem of the belatedness of language, which by its nature, must always lag behind the flux of experience because of our dependence on memory, which must always, as we have seen, be transforming and yet transformed by the unexpected. The only answer becomes "the wisdom of humility"--the knowledge that every construct, every "recall and recapitulation," every poem enacts its own mortality, the inevitability of becoming "worn-out." And this humility must be "endless," for there is no end to the process of return and recovery, even in the face of the inevitability of failure and mortality when, as the section ends,

> The houses are all gone under the sea
> The dancers are all gone under the hill.

In the fifth section of "East Coker," the poet retrieves the violent imagery of the fifth section of "Burnt Norton," in which the struggle of words to contain both the "beginning and the end," the wholeness of the unbounded still center, is figured in a violence which

assaults the word:

> . . . Words strain
> Crack and sometimes break, under the burden,
> Under the tension, slip, slide, perish,
> Decay with imprecision, will not stay in place,
> Will not stay still.

This violence within the word, in the fifth section of "East Coker" becomes a war between the word and the inarticulate, between the staticizing form of language and the experiential, which in its flux is "new in every moment." The menace and enchantment of the "middle way" of history's "grimpen" of the second section becomes the private "middle way" of the middle-aged Eliot, who now figures his own poetic career as a war with language, a war itself framed by two wars:

So here I am, in the middle way, having had twenty years--
Twenty years largely wasted, the years of l'entre deux guerres--
Trying to learn to use words, and every attempt
Is a wholly a new start, and a different kind of failure
Because one has only learnt to get the better of words
For the thing one no longer has to say, or the way in which
One is no longer disposed to say it. And so each venture
Is a new beginning, a raid on the inarticulate
With shabby equipment always deteriorating
In the general mess of imprecision of feeling,
Undisciplined squads of emotion.

Eliot's figuration of war into his private concerns, his use of war to ground and to figure lyrical anxieties here repeats the collapse of the second section's poetic enclosure of war into its point of origin, the poet's own war. The war collapses back onto the life, but just as in

the second section, where the poet's "intolerable wrestling" to bring form to the war leads to a general network of correspondences between poetry, history, and war, the following lines, in their figuration of war, merge the poet's personal confrontation with the paradoxes of his modernity with the war's succession of military victory and loss manifested in the push and pull of territorial borders, expanding the life of the poet into a greater "life," in which we all participate--the final appeal transcending the aesthetic into the political immediacy of necessary and indifferent action:

> . . . And what there is to conquer
> By strength and submission, has already been discovered
> Once or twice, or several times, by men whom one cannot hope
> To emulate--but there is no competition--
> There is only the fight to recover what has been lost
> And found and lost again: and now, under conditions
> That seem unpropitious. But perhaps neither gain nor loss.
> For us, there is only the trying. The rest is not our business.

The second section of "Little Gidding" returns to the theme of the violence of writing, but now war is no longer figured and absorbed into the poet's private war with language and mortality; the metaphoric impetus recedes into a metonymic contiguity of the situation of war and the necessary violence and mortality of all writing. The nightly bombing of London, the eerie stillness of the devastation revealed at daylight, and Eliot's experiences

as an air raid warden and a fire-watcher find themselves in the opening lyric, which unlike the first two lyrics we have looked at, carry a precision of observation:

> Ash on an old man's sleeve,
> Is all the ash the burnt roses leave.
> Dust in the air suspended
> Marks the place where the story ended.
> Dust inbreathed was a house--
> The wall, the wainscot and the mouse.
> The death of hope and despair,
> This is the death of air.
> There are flood and drouth
> Over the eyes and in the mouth
> Dead water and dead sand
> Contending for the upper hand.
> The parched eviscerate soil
> Gapes at the vanity of toil.
> Laughs without mirth.
> This is the death of earth.

Explosions falling through the sky literally meant a "death of air," and the dust, ash, and smoke often lay in thick folds in the air for hours after a night of bombing so that an old man's sleeve, especially that of a fire-warden standing in observation on a roof-top, would have been covered with ash. Dust would have been all that was left of a house or building, and where the ground was "parched" and "eviscerate," as cables and broken sewer pipes would have been exposed in the broken street, water flooding the streets, buckets of sand and water gathered to put out the smoldering fires--"the death of water and fire."

Lyndall Gordon has remarked that "the feat of Eliot's greatest poetry was to convert urban reality into

nightmare, hallucination, vision," and just as the First World War offered Eliot the trope of a city of the living dead, as well as the image of tradition as a rubble, the Second World War bombing of London offers a landscape "already ready-made for vision" (130). The vision of this section--the encounter with the "compound ghost" and the related convergence of Dante's inferno with the streets of London--consciously recalls the Stetson passage of The Waste Land, in which the city achieved a spectral transparency between past and present allowing for the violent encounter between the poet and the mute Stetson, who, as we have seen, is a metonym of war. But, unlike the Stetson passage, where war is buried in the figure of the silent Stetson and is used to figure the formal violence of the "discourse of quotation," in the "Little Gidding" passage, war is the locus and catalyst for the encounter between the "dead master" and the living poet:

> In the uncertain hour before the morning
> Near the ending of interminable night
> At the recurrent end of the unending
> After the dark dove with the flickering tongue
> Had passed below the horizon of his homing
> While the dead leaves still rattled on like tin
> Over the asphalt where no other sound was
> Between three districts whence the smoke arose
> I met one walking, loitering and hurried.

The "intersection of time" occurs when "two worlds become much like each other," when, in an inversion of Dante's journey, the dead ascend to our world, like Hamlet's ghost,

during the intersection time between night and morning, in the coming approach of dawn when the light and the time are uncertain. It comes as the "ending of interminable night/ At the recurrent end of the unending"--lines which again respond to the literal experience of the aftermath of an air-raid, when one is uncertain that the raid is over, and the end of the raid is only an "end of the unending," because the bombing will again begin with the next night and the next night, all dawns and all mornings only interim, uncertain periods in "one interminable night," which is the war. The bomber's descent as the descent of a dark dove, its fiery discharge a "flickering tongue," inverts the traditional symbol of the descent of the white pentecostal dove which baptizes with tongues of flame, delivering in its inspiration the mastery of language; the "flickering tongue" of the bomber, however, as a descent of an infernal pentecost, disfigures the landscape, allowing for a figuration in which the dead and the living are given a momentary grace of communication. The literal disfigurement of the city itself figures a narrative of death, opening a space for the poet's own meditation on his relation to past tradition.

Instead of The Waste Land's flowing crowd of souls that moves over London Bridge, their march punctuated by their sighs and the sounds of bells, the city here is

empty, silent except for the "metal leaves" of shrapnel rattling over the asphalt. The poet's encounter with the "down-turned face" of the ghost (recalling the down-turned faces of The Waste Land's commuters), his "pointed scrutiny with which we challenge/The first met stranger in the waning dusk" marks his persona (in contrast to that of commuter of the Stetson passage) as a sentinel on patrol, his duty to challenge and identify anyone who should not be on the street before the all-clear siren. Upon meeting, ghost and sentinel will tread "the pavement in a dead patrol" like the military comrades of the Stetson passage. And as in the Stetson passage, where the "I" and the "you's" initiate complex referential patterns, drawing, in their ambiguity, a series of doubles, of brothers-in-arms, murderers and co-conspirators, readers and writers, linking various pasts through the doubling of texts, the doubling of the ghost, who is defined as "compound," as well as of the poet who will "assume a double part," is prepared for by a yoking of opposites. As just noted, the "interminable night" is "ending," the "unending" is a "recurrent end." The ghost moves slowly and quickly, "walking, loitering and hurried," the present participles matched with a past participle; the poet's "sudden look" reveals someone whom he has known, yet forgotten, yet "half-recalled," an

understandable series of opposites since the "dead master" is "both one and many."

He is a "familiar compound ghost," who is both intimate and unidentifiable. A representative figure for all the past influences on Eliot--Yeats, Joyce, Mallarme, Shelley, Swift, Dante are the ones most mentioned by readers--he, as Kenner has it, "embodies also the simultaneity of the literary past" (Invisible 321). In the Stetson passage, Eliot embodied such a simultaneity through the juxtaposition of indirect and direct quotations of "ruined" texts, tracing patterns of mortality both cultural and personal. Here, there are no fragments from the texts of "dead masters," but only a vague allusiveness making up the "compound ghost" who is not constructed through the interpenetration of literary sources but through the integration of the poet's creative consciousness of those sources, an integration, in a sense, of what Olney calls all the "past Eliots" (303).

Like the hooded Christ on the road to Emaeus, like the disguised Odysseus, or like Dante's encounter with Brunetto Latini (the original source of this passage), like all recognition scenes, this scene begins with the uncertainty before recognition, an uncertainty that arises out of the co-existence of familiarity and strangeness that is part of any encounter between self and other. The other's visage

is familiar, intimate because as human it mirrors and confirms our own, yet it is strange, unidentifiable, impenetrable because it is yet not our own. For the encounter to be fully realized into the communion of self and other, or more specifically here, of past and present, of the living and dead, of spiritual and material, annunciations and identifications are required. The poet's cry to Stetson, its merging of the forces of recognition and accusation in its "you," received no response, the silent Stetson, as Donoghue stated, merely operating as an absent center for a series of violent interrogations. In the "Little Gidding" passage, annunciation and recognition occur through a doubling of the poet into the dead master who becomes both questioner and respondent:

> So I assumed a double part, and cried
> And heard another's voice cry: 'What are <u>you</u> here?'
> Although we were not. I was still the same,
> Knowing myself yet being someone other--
> And he a face still forming; yet the words sufficed
> To compel the recognition they preceded.

With the assumption of a "double part," reminiscent of Gerontion's doubling into spectator and actor and of the poet's doubling and re-doubling of voices in <u>The Waste Land</u>, the "I" of the poet becomes as provisional, as compound, as familiar and strange, as intimate and impenetrable as the ghostly visage before him, and thus as representative as the self whose consciousness the poems

are metaphors for. As the ghost is made up of a "repetition" of former selves, of former influences and masters, his visage cannot be deciphered or animated, except through its repetition and reanimation by the beholder's self-dramatization, the poet's granting the mask of his own presentness to the past, so that it may speak, its repetitions no longer spelling the exhaustion and emptiness of the textual repetition of The Waste Land but indicating the fulfillment of the past in the present.

Two contrasting themes run through the ghost's soliloquy. First, walking through a scene of violent destruction, the "dead master" reveals the mortality of all writing, that every word, every poem, inevitably falls into the obsolescence or the oblivion of the past:

> . . . Last season's fruit is eaten
> And the fullfed beast shall kick the empty pail.
> For last year's words await another voice.
> And next year's words await another voice.

So, in this passage, in a quartet which will ultimately reveal the use of memory as the liberation from history and death, the threat of amnesia haunts the passage as a counterpoint of death. The poet, urging the ghost to speak, admits that he "may not comprehend, may not remember." And, as the ghost is "not eager to rehearse/My thought and theory which you have forgotten," so will Eliot's be forgotten after having "served their purpose:

let them be." This reminder of the mortality, however, is meliorated by the actuality that the past can speak in the present in ways unforeseen by the past, that, as John Riquelme states, "the fate of writing and of the past in general is always to be understood in ways that could not be anticipated" (64). Thus the voice from the past finds "words I never thought to speak/In streets I never thought to revisit." And thus, in the first section of "Little Gidding," we are told,

> And what the dead had no speech for, when living,
> They can tell you, being dead: the communication
> Of the dead is tongued with fire beyond the language of the living.

Through the appropriation and transfiguration of the past by the present text, the words of the dead transcend their creators' lives, achieving new meanings and new significances through which the present can see its own face; in the same way the present text, in its repetition and transfiguration of the past, "speaks itself free" through its formal confounding of temporality, just as in the "life," memory appropriates and redeems the deadness of the past into the moment of present consciousness. When the ghost refers to "the passage,"

> which now presents no hindrance
> To the spirit unappeased and peregrine
> Between two worlds become much like each other,

a passage opened by the violent rupture of war, we might first think of metaphorical passages--the passage between the underworld and the "middle world," the passage to the "rose-garden," Alice's rabbit's passage, the passages of war or the passages of history down which blind men stumble--but familiar with Eliot's punning on the word passage, we know that this passage which allows the past poets and past selves to speak through the ventriloquist self also denotes the passage of the text before us, where indeed Dante, or Shelley, or Yeats, or Joyce, or Eliot's words make palpable, in their passing, through their willed and sometimes violent meeting with the "logic of death," (for which, as Riquelme states, "the living have no adequate language" (65)), not only the mortal root of all writing but also a metaphor for resurrection.

EPILOGUE

Apropos of Eliot's play on ends and beginnings, this study began with the lining up of charges, both direct and implied, against the poet of the Four Quartets, charges emanating from a complex web of assumptions concerning normative relations of poetry to the barbarism of modern war, to modernity and authenticity, and to political and moral relevance. To investigate the implications of Eliot's figuration of war, we began with the first "post-war" poem, "Gerontion," written after the first of the deux guerres that framed Eliot's poetic career, continued with the second "post-war" poem, The Waste Land, and finally ended where we began, with Eliot's poetry of the Second World War, the Four Quartets. This apparently chronological movement was not meant to begin at the beginning, to seek some genetic development of Eliot's thoughts on the relation of war to poetry as expressed in the poems, as if to trace the unified development of an "idea in progress" from 1919 to 1942. Rather, because Eliot's figuration of war in the Four Quartets occurs in passages that "repeat" "Gerontion" and The Waste Land, and,

in turn, because these passages are part of a larger whole of the "recall and recapitulation" of a "poetic life," it was more appropriate to follow Eliot's own direction: to "start again," to return to the beginning, to seek out the individual pasts of the "life," to establish their nature, and then to return to the point from which we began, the Four Quartets, not so much to put forward a defense, an apologia, as to demonstrate how the poetry itself, both in its beginnings and its ends, anticipated and grappled with the charges made long after its publication.

The figuration of war, significantly more apparent in the Four Quartets than in the earlier poems, stands as a trope, however unstable, for the problematic correlation of the poetic and the historical in a time of total war when all cultural forms seemed suddenly deprived of their innocence. To write poetry in a time of war, for T. S. Eliot, was to confront the accusations of history's "horrific capability," accusations of poetry's complicity, of its irrelevance, of its inadequacy. To figure such a threat into the poetry meant not to cancel or to evade history's accusatory colloquy but, by giving it form, to articulate the necessary implication of all writing in the conditions of history. It is, however, this very freedom of willed form and the subsequent opportunity for the encounters and valedictions of past and present, the

precarious encounter of reader and writer, repeated and transformed by each generation--like that of Eliot's compound-ghost--which give, to use George Steiner's phrase, the "edge of conjecture" to the transcendence of mortality.

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DOCTORAL EXAMINATION AND DISSERTATION REPORT

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Title of Dissertation: "Modernity and War in the Poetry of T. S. Eliot"

Approved:

Major Professor and Chairman

Dean of the Graduate School

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

Date of Examination:

November 6, 1992